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Peter Schrag

AGAINST THE WAR BUT MARRIED TO IT

by KAREN HOUPPERT

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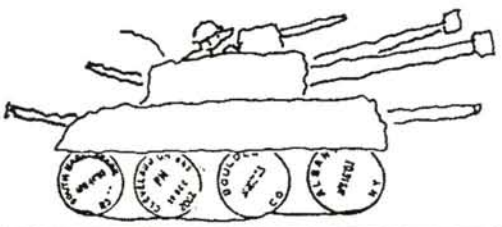
LETTERS



R.O. BLECHMAN

LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE RED?

Washington, DC

■ Re Victor Navasky's "Seeing Red at the *Post*" [Oct. 13], about my coverage in the *Washington Post* of Kathy Boudin's parole. Navasky takes me to task for describing Elisabeth Irwin High School, which Boudin attended in the late 1950s, as "Communist-influenced." Citing my recent (private) e-mail correspondence with Andrew McLaren, the school's current director, he says that I declined McLaren's request for a correction, and that I offered "selectively" quoted information from the school's seventy-fifth anniversary commemorative publication to buttress my point.

But it's Navasky who's doing the selecting. The entire quotation from the school's publication, which Navasky elides in your pages, reads as follows: "In January, 1945, we voted to finish History with Russian History instead of the last two years of American History. We were all pretty much left-leaning 'progressives,' and thought Russia was great and Communism a noble experiment. Many flirted with Communism as an alternative." The upper-case *C*s are in the original, by the way.

I cited this to McLaren in response to his claim that Elisabeth Irwin "has never been pro-communist or communist-influenced." McLaren wrote back cordially that he "appreciated" my comments, then offered to rewrite his letter and submit the revised version for publication, minus the request for a correction, as it turned out. That was that.

Navasky called the *Post*'s Christine Haughney in New York to inquire about the story, but for some reason he didn't call me. I would have gladly explained all of the above to him if he had done so. CHARLES LANE

NAVASKY REPLIES

New York City

■ First, Charles Lane takes me to task for quoting a paragraph from what he calls "private" correspondence with EI's director. Since Lane sent it in response to the director's letter to the *Post*, I assumed it was not meant to be unpublic.

Second, Lane takes me to task for not quoting more of his "private" letter. I'm glad he has filled us in on the rest of it, but again, it's a non sequitur. The letter he is quoting is merely one alum's account; others had opposite experiences and conflicting memories. The real question is, Why include such an irrelevant (and incendiary) opinion as if it were fact in a news article ostensibly about something else?

Finally, we can all agree that Andrew McLaren is more of a gentleman than I am, but my suspicion (perhaps based on the *Post*'s decision not to publish my own letter to the editor) is that had he not agreed to cut the offending passage, his letter would have not been published.

We are pleased to publish Lane's letter—in full. VICTOR NAVASKY

IF IT BLEEDS, IT LEADS

■ *As we expect from our loyal but fractious readers (who tend to write in when they're peeved), our new cover design, inaugurated on the September 29 issue featuring John Nichols's "Blood in the Water" cover story, was met with a mixture of excitement and pique. It took us back to the days of our design overhaul, January 1, 1996, which caused an explosion of protest—and excitement. (Readers grew to love the redesign.)* —*The Editors*

Crawfordsville, Ind.

■ I note with some trepidation that you have hired a new design team, and I am appalled at the savageness of the imagery of their first cover. The knowledge that George Bush's policies have wreaked death and devastation across the globe should be a deterrent, not an impetus, for this kind of visual. JESSICA ROSENBERG

Palo Alto, Calif.

■ Is it any coincidence that your new cover design, with the head "Blood in the Water," has what's known as a "full bleed" image (running off all four sides)? It's a dubious visual pun. Previous *Nation* covers by the design firm Open are sadly missed. MARK EASTMAN

Evanston, Ill.

■ I was impressed by the look of the first cover by the Avenging Angels. Alas, I was a little disappointed by the physics. The picture has the larger bubbles (rising through the water on the lower right) lagging below the smaller ones, when in fact the opposite happens in nature. The arrangement is appropriate for raindrops falling down, not bubbles going up. DAVID FERSTER

Brooklyn, NY

■ I don't really like the new covers. Your content, as always, is great. Lead us out of the ignorant darkness that is American politics right now. AMELIA HENNIGHAUSEN

Brooklyn, NY

■ Nooooo! Mere months after *The American Prospect* stopped using Bell Gothic for its headlines, you start using it on your covers. I can't escape. Bell Gothic was designed for small font sizes, as used in telephone books, but it's a terrible large font. I may have to start ripping the covers off your wonderful magazine. I'm not a crank. Really. DANIEL T. MAINZ

New York City

The revised logo is quite handsome. I'm particularly fond of the drop shadow, a sophisticated design tool. I look forward to the introduction of bolding and underlining you have craftily held back while we adjust to this groundbreaking evolution. NICHOLAS MUSOLINO

Las Vegas

■ I recently renewed for two more years. Keep up the good work. I like the new cover format, too. WILLIAM HUGGINS

Brooklyn, NY

■ Thank you for the past few years of smart, exciting covers. Their sophistication and clarity matched the writing and, damn it, looked good on the subway. The visual transformation a few years ago from stodgy to wide-awake and vital was a bold move—no wonder your circulation climbed. The new look is crude, the typography clumsy, the imagery obvious, the layout lifeless. Please reconsider. ROBERT KIMMEL

Medford, Mass.

■ I just received the September 29 issue and I am impressed with the new look. Stay with it. CARL MARTIN

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY

Batavia, NY

■ "It can't happen here," the Chilean people said on September 11, 1973 (Ariel Dorfman, "Lessons of a Catastrophe"; Peter Kornbluh, "Chile, 9/11/73"; Marc Cooper, "Remembering Allende") [Sept. 29]. Except it did happen. It *can* happen. Anywhere. Anytime. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Our current leaders would have us disregard this. "Go shopping," they urge, "and leave the governing to us." To argue is unpatriotic. Undoubtedly, the only Chileans who disappeared were those who disloyally refused to go along with Pinochet's plan. Or got in the way. Or were killed by accident.

It *can* happen here. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1781, "Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe repositories." WILLIAM P. TROLINGER

Garden City, NY

■ In addition to 9/11/01 and "Chile, 9/11/73" there was another, earlier 9/11. On September 11, 1914, the French colonial rulers of Morocco issued an edict placing Morocco's Middle Atlas Berbers under French legal jurisdiction as part of a larger policy intended to de-Islamify the Berbers and assimilate them into Western culture. A second, more famous "Berber Edict" was issued in 1930, extending

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EDITORIALS

The Growing Disquiet

In the end, George W. Bush got Congress to approve the $87 billion he insisted on for the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq. But the fact that 137 members of Congress—twelve in the Senate and 125 in the House—voted against the appropriation suggests a growing disquiet about the folly of the Administration's pre-emptive war and the dangerous failings of its postwar planning.

In the Senate, where a majority including eight Republicans demanded, over the President's objections, that part of the money be designated as a loan rather than a gift (in effect a warning against further massive expenditures), Ted Kennedy spoke for those who rejected the notion that voting for the bill equated with patriotism. "A no vote is not a vote against supporting our troops," he said. "It is a vote to send the Administration back to the drawing board. It is a vote for a new policy—[a] policy worthy of the sacrifice our soldiers are making." In the House, John Conyers, who as a freshman in 1965 was one of seven members to vote against President Johnson's request for more money for Vietnam, noted that the $87 billion is "on top of the $67 billion already spent, and there is no end in sight."

Although Bush's threat to use his veto if the House goes along with the Senate's loan provision virtually guarantees it won't be included in the bill's final version, the House's overwhelming (but nonbinding) endorsement of the idea reflects the worries of legislators who, amid a struggling economy and rising US casualties, are being asked hard questions by their constituents. GOP Representative Frank LoBiondo told the *Washington Post* that among voters in his New Jersey district, "there's no question about supporting the troops, but I do get questions about the money on top of that." The *Post* noted that a growing number of Republican officeholders are trying to distance themselves from the President, afraid he might harm their re-election chances next year.

Even more striking are the voices of spouses and other relatives of troops stationed in Iraq. In this issue, Karen Houppert quotes the wife of an Army Reserve engineer as saying she was warned by another wife that she was "aiding terrorism" by speaking out. Her reply: "That would be our President—the one who is leaving our soldiers there as sitting ducks."

Meanwhile, opposition to the Administration's policies continues in the international community. After the United Nations Security Council adopted a US-British resolution effectively endorsing the occupation, the UN representatives of Russia, France and Germany were quick to assert that they wouldn't come up with any money or soldiers.

The Administration's response to these developments has been twofold: On the one hand, it denies there are any problems, and, on the other, it moves behind the scenes to address them. Thus the announcement of a new UN–World Bank trust fund that could be the recipient of donations from countries that refuse to give money directly to the United States but feel an obligation to assist in rebuilding Iraq. Thus, too, the reports that the Pentagon is planning troop withdrawals from Iraq next year, which could be seen as indicating that if all else fails, the Administration may simply abandon Iraq in time for the election.

There are, as we have said before, no good solutions to the current mess in Iraq. We can only hope that as the disquiet on the home front grows, the Administration will be compelled to cede increasing authority to the UN and to a sovereign Iraqi government as quickly as possible, and that with the discrediting of the Administration's policies, voters next year will send Bush, Rice, Rumsfeld and Cheney to join the ranks of the unemployed.

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COMMENT

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Many Peaces, One War

Iraq lies in ruin, the US military occupation is generating a sustained guerrilla resistance, crime is rampant in Baghdad and an Iraqi civil war along ethnic and religious lines is a real possibility. Against this background, the American peace movement—a diverse collection of dissenters that includes pragmatic conservatives, concerned moderates, frustrated military families, Arab-Americans, anarchists, peaceniks and more—is attempting to come up with demands and strategies that are both radical and realistic, that both challenge the Bush Administration and unite the opposition, which plans to descend on Washington for a mass demonstration on October 25.

It's no small task. The central point of contention is whether the United States should quit Iraq completely and at all costs or hand off the occupation (which is really a counterinsurgency war) to some sort of international/United Nations security force, with or without US participation. In light of these splits, what is most impressive is that the movement has managed to maintain as much tactical, strategic and ideological coherence as it has.

Win Without War, a self-described "mainstream voice for peace," is a coalition propelled primarily by the online organizing of MoveOn.org. It favors "an end to the quagmire" or a transformation of the occupation into an internationally controlled affair rather than an immediate withdrawal of US troops. WWW led the charge against Bush's request for $87 billion to fund the disastrous occupation. "We want to bury the Bush doctrine in Iraq. But the US can't just walk away from the mess it's created," says Tom Andrews, WWW's national director. WWW is not an official sponsor of the October 25 protest—which has adopted as its slogan "End the Occupation"—though Andrews is quick to mention that many WWW members will attend and perhaps even be onstage.

At the other end of the peace camp's spectrum is the implacably anti-imperialist ANSWER; it demands an unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces, followed by robust reparations to whatever Iraqi government comes next. Citing Iraq's 7,000-year history of civilization and formal jurisprudence, ANSWER spokesperson Bill Hackwell explains that ANSWER opposes any alternative international occupation. Hackwell waves off concerns about civil war, asking: "What could be worse than the current situation? Americans are killing people every day, unemployment and poverty are rampant. This is a disaster. We have to respect Iraq's right to self-determination."

ANSWER brings considerable tenacity and organizational competence to the peace struggle—something that the biggest umbrella group, United for Peace and Justice, recognizes (the two are working closely on the upcoming protest), even though UFPJ has crafted a more nuanced position. The UFPJ position paper, written by Institute for Policy Studies Fellow Phyllis Bennis, calls for the withdrawal of US forces and a quick transition to Iraqi self-government under the auspices of a UN General Assembly–created peacekeeping force (note that UFPJ is not supporting a UN Security Council–led initiative). UFPJ also demands an end to US corporate profiteering and to the privatization of Iraq's economy. Like the other big peace coalitions, the group opposed Bush's re-

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quest for $87 billion to fund the US occupation, but to pay for reconstruction it calls for a program of US and British reparations.

This is a program not just for ending US occupation but also for radically reforming the UN. It is also a set of demands shared by most Iraqi leftists. In Iraq, many secular leftists want the United States out now, but they are also eager to avoid a Lebanon-style civil war, in which they would be the first targeted. This complicated position was first outlined to me by Yanar Mohammed, a socialist, feminist and founding member of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq. As Mohammed explains it, her group seeks to build "a democratic Iraq in which women are in the forefront of social change, working as equal partners with men. And where the wealth of the nation is shared equally among all its people." The mainline Iraqi Communist Party—which was decimated by Saddam's rule but holds a seat on the US-picked Governing Council and is attempting to coax back old members—also wants the United States out, the UN in and a quick move to self-rule. "The new government must be secular and pluralistic," explains Mufid al-Jazairi, one of the ICP's leaders. Though the ICP is critical of the UN, the party's leaders see no alternative force capable of replacing the United States and preventing civil war.

US peace groups are sure to remain conflicted on this issue. "Some groups in UFPJ are increasingly concerned about the question of an alternative occupation," explains Andrea Buffa, an activist with Global Exchange and a steering committee member of UFPJ. "It's an important issue to work out. But realistically, right now, the Bush Administration is not about to leave Iraq, and most Americans still think Saddam Hussein worked with Al Qaeda. So, as a movement our immediate task is educating the public and pressuring for a US withdrawal."

Of course, none of the movement's demands are likely to be met, especially now that the UN has given the US-led occupation its imprimatur. But political demands are the tools of pressure politics and as such must be visionary. The main goal for the left now is to articulate a counternarrative that casts Iraq as an expensive and illegal war that breeds terrorism. For peace forces to disengage from coalitions that do not yet have the perfect answers would be both wrong and tragic. CHRISTIAN PARENTI

Christian Parenti, a fellow at City University of New York's Center for Place, Culture and Politics, is the author of The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America From Slavery to the War on Terror *(Basic).*

Big Bucks in Iraq

In early October, Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council awarded the country's first mobile phone licenses to three companies from the Middle East. The decision was widely interpreted as a signal that Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was expanding its contracting base beyond US corporations like Bechtel and Halliburton to give local companies a break. In particular, analysts pointed out that the networks will be using a technology known as GSM, used widely in Europe and the Middle East, rather than the rival CDMA technology developed by Qualcomm of San Diego for North America and Asia. Qualcomm, joined by Lucent Technologies and South Korea's Samsung, even complained to the *Financial Times* that the bidding process "was designed to exclude CDMA from the beginning."

But any concerns about a US shutout from Iraq's telecom market were grossly exaggerated. The biggest winner in Iraq's largest foreign investment deal since the US invasion turned out to be Motorola, the US electronics giant. Motorola has had a long relationship with US intelligence and was saved from financial disaster three years ago when the Pentagon, in a deal brokered by one of Bremer's top advisers, leased Motorola's Iridium global satellite network; that network later became the backbone of the US military's communications system in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Motorola has close financial ties with Egypt's Orascom Telecom, which won the rights to serve Baghdad and central Iraq, and Mobile Telecommunications Company of Kuwait, which will build the mobile network for southern Iraq. Motorola, with the French vendor Alcatel, has agreed to invest up to $100 million in both companies and could gain up to $200 million in sales by delivering GSM equipment over the two years of the contract, said Lucy Norton, a telecom analyst with the World Markets Research Center. Siemens of Germany could win major supply contracts as well. "Motorola has positioned itself as the primary infrastructure provider for two of Iraq's three mobile market players," said Norton, in an e-mail interview from London. Looking beyond the next two years, Motorola could also be in the "pole position, ahead of the other global vendors, as the key infrastructure provider for one of the fastest-growing markets in the Middle East."

The story illustrates how the financial and trade policies the Bush Administration is pursuing in Iraq are not only benefiting well-connected US corporations but are also slowly integrating Iraq into the global economy and transforming its largely state-run economy into a captive market for foreign multinationals. And it underscores Iraq's economic importance to countries like France and Germany, which opposed the war but voted October 16 to extend US control over Iraq in exchange for vague promises that power will quickly be transferred to the Iraqi people.

The blueprint for Iraq's economic future was unveiled by Iraq's US-appointed finance minister, Kamel al-Gailani, on September 21. The new laws, drafted by the CPA, allow foreign investors to own 100 percent of any Iraqi asset except oil and real estate and to remit profits and royalties when they choose. They also reduce import tariffs to 5 percent and allow foreign banks to take over the country's banking system. Iraq is now "one of the most open countries in the world," proclaimed Gailani. But his reforms were denounced by Iraq's leading business association, which warned that the new laws would "destroy the role of the Iraqi industrialist."

Many observers, including even US businessmen and Iraqis who favored "regime change" in Iraq, agree. They say the shock therapy being applied in Iraq will concentrate wealth in the hands of large US and Iraqi corporations, particularly the family-owned businesses that have won the majority of subcontracts from Bechtel and Halliburton. "I like the analogy of Wal-Mart coming into a town," says Timothy Mills, an attorney in the Washington law firm Patton Boggs who represents several US and foreign corporations that have contracted with the US government and are doing business in Iraq. "The downtown dies, Wal-Mart grows and the

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owners of local businesses are displaced. The effect of Iraq's new foreign investment law for the medium and small-sized Iraqi business could be very detrimental and could result in even more concentration of capital in Iraq." With the US Export-Import Bank providing $500 million to insure US investors, he added, "If I was an Iraqi and I was political, I'd say this was a ploy to favor US companies and let them steal the riches of Iraq." In a similar vein, Fareed Yasseen, an adviser to Adnan Pachachi, a member of the Governing Council, says that the CPA has made its economic plans "completely out of the Iraqi context." He worries that the CPA will sell state-owned assets to cronies of the previous regime and create a "new class of oligarchs" in Iraq. "They haven't taken into account Iraq's reality at all," he says.

Not so, says a US official working with CPA. The 100 percent ownership rules are needed to attract foreign firms to a country where security and basic services are in question. "If you can't have majority ownership, you won't invest," he says. "But are US firms going to get a distinct advantage? No question about it."

The CPA's mishmash of economic ideas is not simply a result of poor planning, as many in Congress have charged. Most of Bremer's advisers are either veterans of Washington's revolving door or financiers steeped in the details of corporate buyouts. Dave Oliver, one of Bremer's senior financial advisers, recently took a leave from his consulting business to draft the budget for the Governing Council. Oliver, who was advising Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and Booz Allen before taking his position, remains on the board of Stratos Global, which does marketing for Iridium, now an independent company. In 2000 Oliver, then President Clinton's Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions and Technology, brokered the $250 million deal for the Pentagon to lease Iridium's global satellites, in which Motorola had invested more than $5 billion. (As a Stratos director, "I stayed away from Iridium because I was so close to it," Oliver says.)

Another key figure on Bremer's economic team is Thomas Foley, an investor and Bush campaign donor who specializes in mergers and acquisitions, a business he learned as head of Citicorp's leveraged buyout division and, later, founder of the NTC Group, which acquired a string of US textile and manufacturing companies in the 1980s. As director of the Office of Private Sector Development, he will manage the privatization of Iraq's 200 state-owned enterprises.

In September, someone in Foley's office had the bright idea to invite fourteen Eastern European finance officials to Baghdad to give advice about privatization. They included the notorious Yegor Gaidar, who presided over the Russian mass privatizations of the early 1990s. Gaidar's policies "led directly to the ruination of the Russian middle class, the collapse of industry, the loss of savings and widespread poverty," says Stephen Cohen, professor of Russian studies and history at New York University. Not surprisingly, the Iraqis weren't impressed. Mowafaq Mahmood, managing director of the Bank of Baghdad, rejected every suggestion about privatization. "I must say I haven't learned any lesson from your experience," he said, signaling that Iraqis may want to preserve parts of their socialist economy.

Bremer has already shown that he can change course when decisions go bad. After thousands protested his decision to demobilize the Iraqi military without paying them, for example, he slowed the pace of privatization and agreed to keep many employees on the payrolls of state-owned enterprises until they could be sold off to foreign buyers. That flexibility goes only so far, however; Bremer will allow dissent from the Governing Council, a US official says, "as long as it doesn't violate one of the red lines we told them about." That could give Iraqis little room to maneuver when confronted with unilateral decisions coming from Washington.

When ideology drives policy, as it does in Iraq, pragmatism is swept aside and generals and bureaucrats hop to the beat of the Commander in Chief. If Bush truly wants to transform Iraq's economy into what his aides describe as a beacon of free enterprise for the Middle East, his good soldiers will go along. Unfortunately, the outcome is likely to be more bloodshed, more chaos and more deals for American companies like Motorola. TIM SHORROCK

Tim Shorrock, a Maryland freelance journalist, has been reporting about Asia, globalization and finance for more than twenty years for many publications at home and abroad.

Strange Bedfellows

One reason the Bush Administration gave for going to war in Iraq was Saddam Hussein's alleged ties to terrorists. So it is ironic that one of the partners in a big Iraqi firm being used by US contractors in Iraq is also a founding partner in an organization that's been identified as helping fund Al Qaeda. So far, however, neither the government nor the contractors have shown much concern.

Sadoon Al-Bunnia is one of three principals in one of Iraq's oldest companies, the Al-Bunnia Trading Company. The Iraqi firm has become a major subcontractor for US firms working under US government contracts in Iraq. But, as documents obtained by *The Nation* from the Lugano office of the Swiss Federal Commercial Registry show, Sadoon Al-Bunnia is also a founding partner of a Swiss-registered firm called the Malaysian Swiss Gulf and African Chamber (MIGA), which the US government and the United Nations Security Council have designated as funders of Al Qaeda.

MIGA is one of fourteen businesses controlled by Ahmed Idris Nasreddin and Youssef M. Nada. Then–Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said in an August 29, 2002, news release that businesses in the Nasreddin-Nada network "appeared to be providing a clandestine line of credit to a close associate of Usama bin Laden and as of late September 2001, Usama bin Laden and his Al Qaida organization received financial assistance from Youssef M. Nada." (Attempts to reach the Al-Bunnia Trading Company in Baghdad were unsuccessful.)

Asked about the Al-Bunnia–Al Qaeda connection, Treasury spokesman Taylor Griffin said the law is unambiguous. "The basic story is this: MIGA was designated, Al-Bunnia was not," said Griffin. By "designated," Griffin was referring to the list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists compiled by Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. American individuals and firms are prohibited from doing business with any person or organiza-

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tion on the list. "Certainly [Al-Bunnia's] association with MIGA should raise some due diligence concerns," Griffin said. "But it is not necessarily wrong for a US company to do business with him, and it is certainly not illegal."

Agreeing with that assessment is Bechtel, which signed up the Al-Bunnia Trading Company as its first Iraqi subcontractor to work on the reconstruction of Iraq's Al Mat bridge. "Al Bunnia was vetted through the [US-led Coalition Provisional Authority]," Bechtel spokesman Howard Menaker said in an e-mail. "During the background investigation, there was nothing found that indicated we could not work with Al Bunnia. Further, there were additional informal discussions with other individuals and advisors to us but again nothing indicated wrong doing nor that we would be precluded from doing business with Bunnia." Another firm with close ties to the White House that's angling to help clients win Iraq contracts, GOP lobbyist Haley Barbour's New Bridge Strategies, proudly announces on its website that its local partner in a consortium bidding on a contract is "led by the Al-bunnia family who are a leading commercial group in Iraq with over 80 years experience in Iraq."

To be sure, who gets put on Treasury's "terrorist" list is not exactly a strict science, legal experts say. Georgetown law professor David Cole notes that "groups are designated behind closed doors, in a secret process, without any notice, without any hearing and even without any substantive criteria for what counts as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. It's just a term the Bush Administration made up." Nonetheless, it does seem odd that the US government cares so little about its own efforts to break the chain of Al Qaeda's financing. But then, the boondoggle that is postwar Iraq appears to operate under a different logic from that used by the Administration to justify the war. LAURA ROZEN

Laura Rozen is a journalist who covers national security issues from Washington, DC.

Wellstone in 2004

ELECTION MATTERS

During the two years when he was exploring a bid for the 2000 Democratic presidential nomination, Paul Wellstone spent a lot of time trying to figure out how a progressive could get elected to the nation's top job. He was certain it was possible, as certain as he had been in 1990 that a college professor with almost no money could beat a millionaire incumbent for a Senate seat, as certain as he had been in 1996 that a senator who voted against welfare reform and made himself the number-one target of the Republicans could be re-elected.

But Wellstone did not believe he had it within himself to figure out how to grasp the grail that has eluded men he admired: Jesse Jackson, Tom Harkin, Bob Kerrey, Ralph Nader. So, throughout 1997 and 1998, Wellstone traveled the country, not with a stump speech but with a stump question—or more precisely, a set of stump questions. "How do we talk about education in a way that gets us beyond false choices?" he asked teachers. "Don't you think we should stop paying these subsidies to big corporations and start protecting family farmers who take pride in growing safe, healthy food?" he asked not just farmers but inner-city moms and dads worried about grocery store shelves packed with out-of-date junk food. Years before the Enron scandal, he asked, "Don't you think people are more concerned about monopolies and the concentration of power in a few hands than most politicians imagine?" Then Wellstone would listen, often holding a hand or clasping a shoulder to emphasize that this senator actually did want an answer. Wellstone augmented his research by studying piles of polling data and poring over political biographies and examinations of the body politic.

By mid-1998, Wellstone was pretty sure he had gotten the answer he needed. It had everything to do, he told me once as we were driving across the upper Midwest, with "putting issues on the table." Progressives could not win meaningful victories if they confined themselves to a debate over issues and solutions defined by the Heritage Foundation and conservative media. A centrist Democrat like Bill Clinton might win by triangulating the obstacle course set up by the right, but a progressive would need to set up a new course. By putting such issues as US trade policy and corporate corruption—in those pre-Seattle, pre-Enron days—"back on the table," and by pouring resources into educating and organizing around those issues, an excited Wellstone argued, a progressive presidential candidate could play offense. And, yes, Wellstone wanted to be the party's quarterback.

As he explained his plan, however, Wellstone shifted painfully in the car seat. Neither of us knew he was suffering from undiagnosed multiple sclerosis. Health concerns led him to decide against a 2000 presidential race. But had Wellstone not been killed in a plane crash on October 25, 2002, his would almost certainly

CALVIN TRILLIN

'State Dept. Study Foresaw Trouble In Iraq'

—*Headline,* New York Times, *October 19*

Before the war some working groups at State
Predicted problems certain to await
The occupying forces in Iraq.
But at Defense the neocons held sway.
They had contempt for viewpoints on the fray
That didn't come from them or from their claque.

They paid no mind to such defeatist talk.
They knew for sure the cakewalk that we'd walk
Would tame the Middle East with one great blow.
Iraq would pay its reconstruction bill.
Resistance, once we'd won, would soon be nil.
And what could striped-pants cookie-pushers know!

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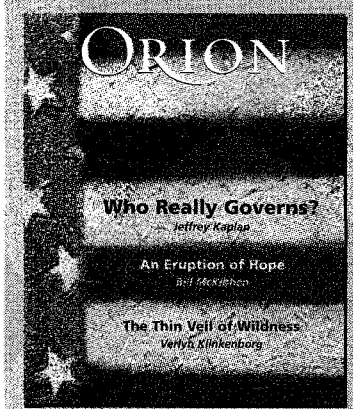

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Jeffrey Kaplan

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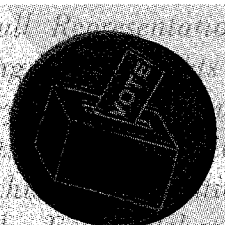

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COMMENT

have been only a temporary exit from presidential politics. After winning re-election as the only Democratic incumbent in a tough race who opposed George Bush's rush to war on Iraq (and assuming he was well enough to avoid questions about his health), Wellstone would have been in the 2004 presidential competition as a progressive populist with a strategy not to "join the debate" but to win it. As it is, he remains a presence—if not quite the influence he should be—in the contest.

"We need to finish the work Paul Wellstone started," declares Joe Lieberman. John Edwards, a millionaire trial lawyer, says his appeal to blue-collar workers recalls Wellstone's legacy of giving "voice in Washington to regular Americans." Dick Gephardt invokes Wellstone when he talks about farm policy. John Kerry refers to Wellstone as a "pied piper of modern politics" (conveniently forgetting that when both men were up for re-election, he did not follow the piper's call on welfare reform in 1996 or Iraq in 2002). Though they differed on issues fundamental to Wellstone, most notably free trade and welfare, Howard Dean has made Wellstone's best line—"I represent the democratic wing of the Democratic Party"—his own (though Wellstone's former press secretary Jim Farrell argued in the May 26 *Nation* that "Dean's No Wellstone"). And then there is Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chair Dennis Kucinich, who says, "Paul Wellstone stood for so many progressive ideas that are congenial to who I am."

Wellstone liked Kucinich, but you can bet that if he were alive he would remind his friend that progressives have to worry less about sounding ideologically pure notes and more about appealing to the great mass of voters. Though Kucinich mirrors Wellstone's ideology, it is Dean who has recognized the importance of framing Democratic issues with an eye toward their popular appeal. He has, as well, poured resources into the kind of grassroots organizing that characterized Wellstone's campaigns.

Still, the emotion that at least in part powers Dean's campaign—anger at Bush—would have troubled Wellstone, even if that anger is as much a matter of what Dean backers want to hear as how Dean crafts his appeal. Wellstone believed a politics based on anger, as opposed to optimism, might win one election. But, he said, it would never build a movement for fundamental change. Wellstone was certain that it is possible to be right and to be President. But to grab the grail, he argued, progressive campaigns had to be less about the other guy's failings and more about enabling citizens "to dream again." It was not a matter of fearing the rough and tumble of politics. Wellstone loved campaigning and strategizing as much, perhaps even more, than debating ideas. He just believed that progressives had to do things differently in order to win not just an election but a whole new politics.

Wellstone proved in Minnesota that a pragmatic yet visionary mix of calculation and idealism, of ideology and organizing, could reanimate progressive politics in one state. And his ideas and ideals could yet animate the politics of the 2004 campaign. As Wellstone knew, the campaign season is a dynamic period when the best candidates learn and grow. The Democrats now campaigning for President need to do a good deal of learning and growing; they should begin by praising Paul Wellstone a little less, and imitating him a lot more.

JOHN NICHOLS

(Continued on Page 21)

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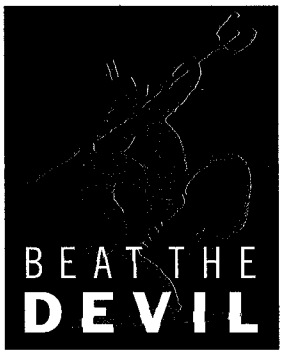
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Krugman's World



Enter the world of Paul Krugman, a world either dark (the eras of Bush I and Bush II) or bathed in light (when Bill was king). "What do you think of the French Revolution?" someone is supposed to have asked Zhou En-lai. "Too soon to tell," Zhou laconically riposted. Krugman entertains no such prudence. Near the beginning of his collection of columns, *The Great Unraveling*, Krugman looks back on Clinton time. A throb enters his voice. He becomes a Hesiod, basking in the golden age.

"At the beginning of the new millennium, then, it seemed that the United States was blessed with mature, skillful economic leaders, who in a pinch would do what had to be done. They would insist on responsible fiscal policies; they would act quickly and effectively to prevent a repeat of the jobless recovery of the early 90s, let alone a slide into Japanese-style stagnation. Even those of us who considered ourselves pessimists were basically optimists: we thought that bullish investors might face a rude awakening, but that it would all have a happy ending." A few lines later: "What happened to the good years?" A couple of hundred pages later: "How did we get here? How did the American political system, which produced such reasonable economic leadership during the 1990s, lead us into our current morass of dishonesty and irresponsibility?"

Across the past three years Krugman has become the Democrats' Clark Kent. A couple of times each week he bursts onto the *New York Times* Op-Ed page in his blue jumpsuit, shoulders aside the Geneva Conventions and whacks the bad guys.

Krugman paints himself as a homely Will Rogers type, speakin' truth to the power elite from his virtuous perch far outside the Beltway: "Why did I see what others failed to see?" he asks, apropos his swiftness in pinning the Liars label on the Bush Administration. "I'm not part of the gang," he answers. "I work from central New Jersey, and continue to live the life of a college professor—so I never bought into the shared assumptions.... I don't need to be in the good graces of top officials."

All of which is self-serving hooey. The homely perch is Princeton. Krugman shares, with no serious demur, all the central assumptions of the neoliberal creed that has governed the prime institutions of the world capitalist system for the past generation and driven much of the world deeper, ever deeper, into extreme distress. The unseemly deference he shows Clinton's top officials could be simply, if maliciously, explained by his probable expectation that one day, perhaps not too long delayed in the event of a Democratic administration taking over in 2005, he will be driving his buggy south down the New Jersey Turnpike toward a powerful position of the sort he has certainly entertained hopes of in the past.

Faintly, though not frequently, a riffle of doubt perturbs Krugman's chipmunk paeans to the Clinton Age. "In an era of ever-rising stock prices hardly anyone noticed, but in the cold clear light of the morning after we can see that by the turn of the millennium something was very rotten in the state of American capitalism." It turns out he means only book-cooking of the Enron type (an outfit the hermit of Princeton once consulted for).

Krugman takes care to advertise that he has enemies to his left. He carefully reprints at the end of his collection a 1999 encomium to the WTO from *Slate* (where he had plenty of room to burst through the straitjacket of 720 op-ed words), stuffed with vainglorious claims for the virtues of globalization. But has "every successful example of economic development this past century—every case of a poor nation that worked its way up to a more or less decent, or at least dramatically better, standard of living...taken place via globalization; that is, by producing for the world market"?

The fact that he skirts Cuba, can't be bothered even to address the consequences, or even contours, of the shift in Third World economic strategies in the postwar period, tells us how little Krugman is prepared to look with any honesty at his own economic ideas in the mirror. What of Argentina, a devastating advertisement for neoliberal failure? Amid the rubble Krugman has this to mumble: "I could explain at length the causes of Argentina's slump: it had more to do with monetary policy than with free markets." A page or two later, brooding comfortably in a column titled "The Lost Continent" (of Latin America), Krugman asks, "Why hasn't reform worked as promised? That's a difficult and disturbing question." But not one that he's prepared to address.

In the concluding pages of a 426-page book, where he might have disturbed himself and his audience with difficult questions about the widening gap, right through Clinton time, between rich and poor across the world and here in the United States, about the reasons Clinton's bubble economy collapsed so abruptly, Krugman prefers to indulge himself in playing to the gallery, Thomas Friedman–style, with some Nader-bashing. He reprints a column written in July 2000, when Nader had decided that a third-party candidacy was the only way he could forcefully raise just those "difficult and disturbing" questions the respectable and conventional Krugman shirks: "And was I the only person who shuddered when Mr. Nader declared that if he were president, he wouldn't reappoint Alan Greenspan—he would 're-educate' him?"

Now suppose someone like Ralph Nader had re-educated Alan Greenspan before 1996, when the Fed chairman refused to impose the margin requirements on stock-market speculators that would have punctured the bubble. It would have been a momentous piece of schooling.

Krugman is a press agent, a busker, for Clintonomics. For him as for so many others on the liberal side, the world only went bad in January 2001. If a Democrat—pretty much any Democrat conventional enough to win Wall Street's approval—takes over again, maybe in 2005, the world will get better again. Who wants to read a 426-page press release? Fortunately we don't have to, as we have to hand a new, serious, radical scrutiny of Clintonomics and neoliberalism by Robert Pollin, and it is to his *Contours of Descent* that I propose to turn in a couple of weeks. ■

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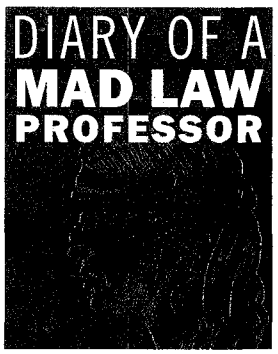
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Loose Cannon



He's an intriguing moral bellwether, Nathaniel Heatwole. Heatwole is that nice young college student who tossed his life away by planting bleach, matches, box cutters and fake explosives on planes, resulting in delays and renewed passenger jitters, as law enforcement initiated searches of airplanes throughout the United States. Heatwole declared himself engaged in a mission of "civil disobedience with the aim of improving public safety for the air-traveling public."

It was an interesting claim, if a familiar one in the annals of crime: *It may look like I was joyriding in that little red Corvette, but really I was just testing the security. Think of it as a public service. You passed—now unhand me.* Heatwole's rationale was hacker justice run amok, or worse, a genuinely risky sort of Russian roulette. (What if the wrong person had found those knives and those matches before the FAA did?) His deed certainly bears no resemblance to civil disobedience within the tradition of passive resistance. It was an act of aggressive vigilantism.

According to the *New York Times*, Heatwole "keeps his brown hair short and parted." I guess that's supposed to be a cipher for his being earnest and eager. Or obsessive and orderly. Maybe preppy and presentable? He is also a storm-chaser, it was noted—one of those dashing thrill-seekers who jump into jeeps to speed after tornadoes in full tilt. He's a ham radio operator too, always at the center of things when disaster strikes. There's a certain romance in these descriptive details, reiterated by many media outlets as though they legitimized Heatwole's adventurism, as though this really were a test that federal authorities flunked. How ashamed the big guys ought to be! How brave the little upstart!

In Congress, there was a bipartisan call for leniency for Heatwole, who was judged not a flight risk and allowed to go home on his own recognizance. Someone with a nice neat part in his clean brown hair isn't terrifying enough, I guess, to be slammed with the full force and fury of the Homeland Security Act. Let me be clear: I am not arguing that a young man with no prior record should automatically be held without bail or do hard time. On the contrary, all things being equal, I would wish the same considered disposition for his doppelgänger, the spirited young Ahmed Heatwole. I do marvel, in other words, that he has been handled with such comparative leniency in an era when others, whose alleged misdemeanors did not result in anything like the havoc and disruption of Heatwole's crimes, have disappeared into military brigs, perhaps for the rest of their lives. It's the whimsical polarity of outcome that worries me. And in the continued absence of any Justice Department clarification of the standards being employed in terrorism prosecutions, such disparity remains decipherable only at the level of guess.

What's also unsettling is that Heatwole has been rendered altogether heroic in so many quarters. Trolling through subways, restaurants, chatrooms and Starbucks, I've heard arguments that he is to be commended for "proving a point."

Everywhere there are theories in praise of lone-wolf obstructionism as a way to hold big government accountable, bizarrely apolitical pronouncements like, "Anyone who's smart enough to bring the whole bureaucracy grinding to a halt gets my vote." Watch out, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Heatwole, who ascribes his so-called activism to Quaker teachings, seems to me much more the product of the Stephen Glass/Jayson Blair school of acting out. One can imagine them in high school—not the super bad boys of the trenchcoat mafia but the fanatical good-boy hall monitors to whom foolish teachers entrusted the rule book, and to whom every rule became a toy, a trick or a bludgeon. Smart young men mostly, in the grip of noble resentments of authority as well as less noble little-boy longings to make the biggest splash, the loudest bang, the longest dribble of spit. People without the inclination to be overtly disobedient or rebellious but to whom rules present an irresistible game of manipulation rather than balance, of strategy rather than principle. The gadfly as Virtue Aggrieved.

A friend holds the view that "young people today" (are we aging baby boomers or what?) are wholly shaped by computer gaming, eternally fascinated by the ability to beat the system, any system, doesn't matter which system. But I worry that there is a deeper cynicism at work, in which nothing matters because nothing is real, in which cheating is rationalized as a kind of free-floating ambition, the necessary corruption of a world in which everyone is a crook. If every exhortation to social order is viewed as hypocritical, then how sweet the "gotcha" moment of the anarchic Mr. Heatwole. Stephen Glass's life is "great stuff," according to a college-age friend of mine who is looking forward to *Shattered Glass*, the movie based on his duping of *The New Republic*.

Similarly, the film *Catch Me If You Can* is a quite forgiving take on the life of Frank Abagnale Jr., the teenager who ran away from his broken home to take up careers impersonating—successfully—an airline pilot, a lawyer and a doctor. Leonardo DiCaprio as Abagnale is so sympathetic—we love precisely the genial swagger, the very confidence in his conning. He's harmless! A striver! A survivor against the odds! The narrative of mitigation is absolutely irresistible.

This rhetoric of the romantic outlaw—the courageous cowboy who one-ups the dimwitted sheriff—has always been ingrained in our American psyche. But it is a rather dangerous indulgence at a time when our criminal law is being reconfigured as a two-tiered system—one for those who are "like us" and therefore likable, and the other for "evildoers" who may be tossed into a pit and forgotten. The seductions of such tracking hobble our intelligence—in every sense of that word. Perhaps it is time to rethink those dual narratives: the one of transgressors whose neat and well-pressed demeanor allows for personal recognizance; and the other of statusless, legally invisible ghosts who, as John Ashcroft has insisted, don't deserve the protections of justice. This surely risks exacerbating the raging terrors without while minimizing the carelessly authoritarian, almost suicidal sense of entitlement within. ■

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ARTICLES

AGAINST THE WAR BUT MARRIED TO IT

by KAREN HOUPPERT

Fort Drum, New York

It is morning on March 20, 2003, the first day of the war against Iraq. And on this Army post in upstate New York, it is raining. Hard.

As Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's early-morning radio address reminds waking Americans that there is sacrifice involved in patriotism, two dozen soldiers with forty-pound rucks on their back practice urban warfare techniques in a march across Fort Drum's main road. Machine guns in hand, the soldiers approach an intersection and pan the horizon. Two of them dart into the center of the street to stop traffic. Then, one by one, the mostly very young soldiers file past, their camouflaged uniforms caked with mud, their grim and grimy faces fractured by rivulets of rain.

Three minivans with moms on the way to the commissary or the office or to drop the kids at school pause on one side of the intersection. Two soldiers in a Humvee pause on the other side. As traffic backs up, no one honks with irritation, as they might in New York City. The drivers sit patiently, respectfully, at the intersection, as if waiting for the passage of a funeral procession. They have seen this a hundred times.

Later that afternoon, in Clark Hall, Frederick Calladine, chief of casualty and mortuary affairs at Fort Drum, briefs a group of forty soldiers. These men and women have the dubious distinction of being the newly appointed "casualty notification officers" for their units. As such, they are getting the PowerPoint ABCs of military mortuary protocol. "Wear your dress uniform," Calladine reminds them, and remember that some wives want to kill the messenger. "Give them the news, then get the hell out of Dodge," he advises.

Meanwhile, outside the post's gates, on a narrow median of grass a few miles away in the center of Watertown, a small gaggle of six peace activists stands in the dusk, in the pouring rain, trying desperately to keep the requisite candles lit in this candlelight peace vigil. Two cardboard posters, the Magic Marker beginning to run, are taped to sticks that have been jabbed into the soft ground. Writ large: WE SUPPORT OUR TROOPS. Writ small: BRING THEM HOME!

On this first day of the war, the sole military wife at the peace

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vigil, Christiane Langer, is understandably emotional. Her soldier husband has not been deployed—yet—but she knows the possibility exists. She also knows she is on dangerous ground. For Langer, coming out against the war in this very conservative community, home of one of the country's largest Army bases, has meant wrestling with her conscience: Will it jeopardize her husband's career if she speaks out? Will she jeopardize her own values if she doesn't? Does silence equal complicity?

Growing up as a child in Germany, Langer was weaned on horror stories about World War II. "I grew up with knowledge about the Holocaust, and the message that I took away from that was, we have a responsibility to speak up when we see the government doing wrong," she says. She is sympathetic with her friends, the many, many military wives who she says are against the war in Iraq but are afraid to voice their opinions. Still, she made a conscious decision to make her opinion known.

Fast-forward six months, and Langer is less alone. Today, the murmurs of discontent among military families are growing louder.

Deployments are stretching out past the originally anticipated six months, with more than 50 percent of the Army's combat brigades now stationed overseas. More than 1,600 soldiers have been injured since the start of the Iraq war, and "peacekeeping" deaths climbed to more than 200 by late October, exceeding the number of soldiers killed during major combat.

Many military wives oppose the war in Iraq but are afraid to voice their opinions, even as deployments are extended and casualties grow.

In an August survey of soldiers deployed in Iraq conducted by the Army's *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, half of the respondents said their unit's morale was low and their training inadequate, and they planned not to re-enlist. Struggling to hold on to an overworked force, the Pentagon was temporarily forced to institute "stop loss," which forbids soldiers in select jobs from getting out—even if they've served their time. The rush to serve predicted in the aftermath of September 11 has not materialized, and some recruitment requirements have been lowered to make it easier for the services to meet their quotas.

Meanwhile, dozens of interviews with military families in the Fort Drum area and beyond show that there is a growing unease with Bush's Iraq policy. Some is direct. "This is just not a war I believe in," says Tammy Schmitt, wife of an Air Force officer who was stationed at Fort Drum. And some is oblique. "You have to support the troops, what are you going to do?" another Fort Drum military wife tells me, then goes on to voice indignation at Bush's after-the-fact plea for United Nations support and the troubling fact that no weapons of mass destruction have surfaced in postwar Iraq. "I'm surprised the CIA hasn't planted some. I'm like, please, just plant something and let me believe."

Clearly there are serious challenges facing any peace movement among military families—not least the reluctance of many military wives to buck tradition. And there are many unanswered questions. Will these conversations in kitchens and commissaries ever translate into organized opposition? And what happens if they do? If military families are outspoken in their discontent, will complaints about the frequent and extended deployments make any difference at all to military brass? Will it help pressure the United States to withdraw from Iraq? Or will military leaders and their supporters in Congress respond to these complaints by asking for more money, to increase military manpower, so that the burden is shared among a larger pool of soldiers, thus fueling an even greater military buildup?

For women like Langer, these questions are troubling—but shouldn't preclude speaking out. Others are not so sure.

At the moment, opposition to the war among military families is mostly bubbling beneath the surface. Those with the loudest voices are parents. But parents of soldiers have a long tradition of speaking out to protect their kids; they are largely immune from the repercussions. (Uncle Sam isn't likely to blame GI Joe for the sins of his father—or his hippie mom.) What is new are the rumblings of discontent among wives, for whom the stakes are much higher. (And I say wives, rather than spouses, because every one of the male spouses I've encountered comes from inside the establishment, ex-soldiers themselves, and thus has a distinct perspective.)

While the numbers of those willing to go public with their critical views are small, the symbolism is powerful. After all, military families can personally attest to the waste of manpower, the unnecessarily harsh conditions soldiers endure and the inadequate compensation families receive. And they're an irresistible photo-op—typically patriotic in get-up with fatherless (temporarily, hopefully) kids in tow.

Candance Robison, a 28-year-old Texan with a 1-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter, recently organized a protest in Crawford, Texas, where President Bush was spending his vacation. Though she has "zero experience" as a political activist, Robison's learned fast. Since her husband, an engineer in the Army Reserve, was deployed to Iraq in February, she has written letters to the President, organized protests and most recently traveled to Washington to testify at a Congressional briefing. She tells me she addressed her remarks there to the Defense Secretary. "Donald Rumsfeld, get the spare room ready because me and the kids are coming to stay," Robison said, with her cocky Texas drawl. She explained that the Army pay was far less than what her husband had been making as a sales manager at his civilian job. Though his employer had been making up the difference since her husband's deployment, the company can't be expected to continue, now that the deployment has been extended a year. "'Hope you and the missis can put us up!' I told them."

From the beginning, Robison questioned the necessity of this war—"I needed more evidence that there were weapons of mass destruction before I was ready to accept that my husband might come home in a body bag"—but her husband was excited and eager to go. "He believed in what we were going over there to

Karen Houppert, an Air Force brat and a New York journalist, is completing a book called The Waiting Wives Club, *about military wives whose husbands have been deployed.*

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do," she says. "He felt that there were weapons of mass destruction and was very anxious to try and do what he had been training to do for twenty years." But that's changed: "'I would be here and be proud to do my job, but I'm not even sure what my mission is,' he says now."

While Robison's husband supports what she's doing, many in his stateside military community don't. "One of the wives who heads up the family support group read me this supposedly official memo over the phone," Robison said. "She said I am essentially aiding terrorism by speaking out. 'Well,' I said, 'That wouldn't be me, that would be our President—the one who is leaving our soldiers there as sitting ducks.' Then she said that I am never to speak out on behalf of the family support group or the US military. Well, I never have. Because I'm not a member of either one!"

Robison is unusual among military wives in that she didn't grow up a military brat (as many have), she has never lived on an Army post and she currently lives an hour from the nearest military facility. But most wives live their lives deeply immersed in the military community. For them, the gap between holding certain political beliefs and speaking out publicly about these beliefs looms like a canyon. Crossing over it carries tremendous risk.

'Several wives told me stories about their husbands getting in trouble because of their wives being outspoken.'

Just imagine: Your extended family and friends live hundreds of miles away, so your entire social support network consists of other military families. It extends from your neighbor, who picks up your kids after school because you're in a pinch, to your commander's wife, who makes a call because your parents need an extended pass to be on-post and help you care for your newborn, to a fellow spouse, who shares with you a glass of wine and a kvetch, to the chain of command, which provides information about your husband's safety and date of return. In this world, silence can equal self-preservation.

"The wives are afraid. In fact, everybody told me, 'Do not come here and talk to a journalist,'" Langer says, explaining that she had intended to bring along other antiwar wives to speak with me when we met for our second interview at Watertown's Salmon Run Mall. "I thought I would find some to talk to you because we are all of the same opinion about the war—and most of them I would consider quite outspoken…but they are too nervous." Langer says they had almost convinced her to cancel the interview. "Several told me stories about their husbands getting in trouble because of their wives being outspoken. 'If you find your name in the paper, your husband's career is ruined,' they said."

Whether this is true or not is almost irrelevant. As long as the fear of repercussion exists, vocal opposition will be stifled. Indeed, the rules regarding a soldier's political activism are so filled with legalistic minutiae—ranging from a straight-out ban on any partisan activism and on the use of "contemptuous words against officeholders," to specifying that "large" political signs may not be displayed on soldiers' cars, but standard bumper stickers may—as to make most of them afraid to exercise any of their free-speech rights. As one Fort Drum soldier quipped: "Ironically, we're out there defending all these rights that are then denied to us as soldiers." And though that outdated adage that "a soldier who can't control his family, can't control his troops" has been formally repudiated by military brass, the generally harsh climate toward dissent makes many wives reluctant to speak out for fear of implicating their husbands.

Of course, some are active participants in creating that climate. "I take these antiwar protesters personally," 28-year-old Amy Wortham, a Fort Drum Army wife, told me as her husband fought in Afghanistan last winter. She sees them as unpatriotic and anti-military. "By definition I support my husband, therefore I support the military and the war." Referring to Operation Anaconda, a March 2002 engagement in Afghanistan where soldiers from Fort Drum's 1-87 Infantry Battalion were pinned down during an eighteen-hour firefight and two helicopters came under fire, resulting in eight American casualties, Wortham chides the protesters. "My husband puts his life in jeopardy so they could have the freedom to protest."

That they've chosen to exercise that right is not consolation, but ingratitude.

Clearly, a soldier's wife who questions the necessity of American intervention in Iraq steps into a hornet's nest of military values. When husbands spend all day doing what they're told, even when they might think it's stupid, there is a way in which blind faith becomes virtuous. Following orders on the double may be practical in wartime, but it also seeps into almost all aspects of military work and life. Doubt is for the lazy and faint of heart; questioning equals complaining. Within that culture, military wives typically preface any criticism—or political analysis, for that matter—by pointing out that the President of the United States is their husband's boss. What they mean by this is that it's not nice to call their husband's boss a jackass. But what they also mean is that it's hard to accept the sacrifices the military requires of them without believing that it is for some greater good, that their husband missed the birth of their daughter because our national security was at stake. So they believe.

Sort of.

But doubt creeps in around the edges. "I understand the wives, and especially the soldiers, who feel they have no choice but to support the war because otherwise you go insane because you can't live with it, with that contradiction," says Langer. "You can't go into a war and say, I'm totally against it but I'm going to shoot somebody anyway. That doesn't work. And the wives are in the same shoes. In your mind…" Langer struggles to find the right words. "It is possible to train your mind to support something that maybe, in your true heart, that's not what you believe in. I see that in this community."

In these circumstances, counting on any organized opposition from inside the military might be unrealistic. But perhaps being a peace activist, by nature, requires some determined optimism. Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson, co-founders of the antiwar group Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), became so persuaded that there were thousands of military families privately fuming about Iraq that they created an or-

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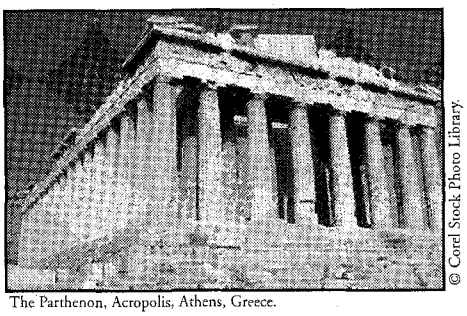

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ganization to represent them in November 2002.

Richardson and Lessin, veterans of the 1960s peace movement and parents of a soldier son who's been deployed to Iraq, were quick to recognize the unique power military families could bring to the larger antiwar effort. "We were very concerned about media coverage that tried to characterize the antiwar movement as those who supported the troops and those who didn't," says Lessin. With that in mind, she and Richardson, who were invited to speak at rallies and demos and even at Congressional briefings, tried to erase that distinction. For example: "We're glad to be here at the biggest pro-troop rally in the country," Lessin told half a million New Yorkers when she spoke at the February 15 antiwar rally there.

While MFSO's membership is still only about 1,000, Richardson says the group is attracting increasing interest. "When President Bush made his reckless 'bring 'em on' comment from the safety of his briefing room, surrounded by armed guards, military families were incensed," he says. Banding together with Veterans for Peace, MFSO began a "Bring Them Home Now" campaign, which has been flooded with thousands of e-mails. The letters prove revealing. One wife, who is a soldier herself and had been deployed to Iraq, now fumes about her husband, a reservist who remains there. "It sickens me every time I see news articles quoting dignitaries coming from [Iraq] saying, 'the soldiers are in good spirits,' 'morale is high,'" she wrote. "I'm here to tell you, it's all lies. Morale is at an all-time low. Soldiers are hating life there, so much so that some are taking their own lives rather than deal with the situation. It has become that drastic." In the short term, there is nothing she can do; in the long term she has plans: "As much as I love the military, when this enlistment is up, I'm running so fast for the civilian border, as is my husband. At this point, when it is time for re-election, I would vote for anyone whose last name wasn't Bush."

The letters are a mix of the conventional, though always compelling, personal trials of families (i.e., the soldier husband who has a 6-month-old child he's never met, the wife who struggled while the Army took three months to straighten out a pay snafu, the soldier whose father died while he was away) with detailed descriptions of the danger and deprivations their soldier husbands face. ("They are rationed 2 bottles of water a day. They spent nearly the whole summer without a/c in temperatures that reached 147 degrees Fahrenheit at one point.") Interestingly, they consistently place blame at the top of the military hierarchy. "I do not blame my husband's battalion commander," one wife writes. "I realize this does not come from him. I blame the Department of the Army and more importantly, I blame President Bush and his Administration."

While conventional wisdom would warn us about seeing these "disgruntled employees" as representative, Lessin and Richardson claim that the sentiment runs broad and deep and, given the profound barriers to speaking out, the fact that any military families are going public is significant—especially wives. They note that military wives like Robison, who organized the Texas protest at Bush's ranch, mark a welcome shift in the makeup of their membership. "In the beginning our organization had more parents of soldiers, with many, though not all, coming out of the Vietnam antiwar movement," says Lessin. "Recently, though, we have had an influx of military spouses, mostly wives."

What makes spouses a potentially powerful ally for peace activists is that they hold great sway over their husbands' re-enlistment decisions.

What makes spouses a potentially more powerful ally for peace activists is that they hold more sway over their husbands' re-enlistment decisions—and that can be a mighty tool. It's certainly a vulnerable spot for the military. For example, in its 2003 statement to Congress the Air Force expresses concern about the fact that 77 percent of its enlisted force is eligible to re-enlist—or not!—in the next two years.

But teasing out the implications of military antiwar sentiment can be tricky. If military wives base their opposition to the war on the grounds that the troops have been there too long, and are overworked and constantly deployed, it can backfire—witness the ongoing debate about whether more troops will solve the Iraq crisis. (In September, Senator John McCain was on *Face the Nation* goading the President to send more troops to Iraq. He expanded from there: "We have to have a bigger Army. We have to have a bigger military and we have to go about understanding what's necessary in order to do that.")

Further, calls to "Bring Them Home Now" by a wide spectrum of groups do not necessarily indicate a broad consensus about the perils of US military aggression. While some who oppose the war do so on principle, others object because they worry that the personal price—the potential death of a loved one—is just too high.

Perhaps the most tireless activists have both reasons in mind, like Langer, who protested week after week on the Watertown square. "We think that our husbands—when they signed up for the service and also us, when we co-signed by marrying them—were well aware that the ultimate sacrifice might be their lives," she says. "But we want to be sure, as wives, that there is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that this sacrifice was necessary." When asked whether that means she is against this particular engagement or whether she identifies herself as a pacifist, Langer laughs. "I identify myself as a hypocrite," she says. "I'm a pacifist who married a soldier." ■

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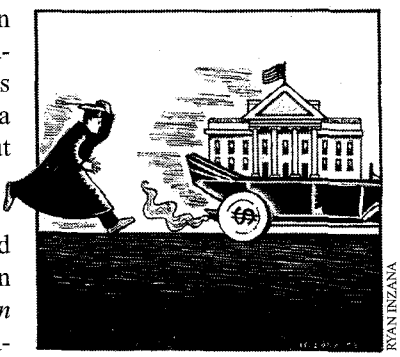
No-Brainer

DAVID L. KIRP

Since taking office, George W. Bush has been nearly mute on the topic of higher education. Only concerning affirmative action has the self-confessed Yale slacker expressed a position—that is, if "I favor diversity but oppose affirmative action" counts as a position. But with the Higher Education Act, which provides more than $80 billion in grants and loans and is up for renewal in 2004, this is soon to change. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that "a scathing critique" of higher education is likely early next year. As an unnamed Administration official bragged to the *Washington Times* this past spring, "If you thought the elementary and secondary education lobbyists squealed when we talked [about] accountability, you ain't seen nothing yet."


RYAN INZANA

"The College Cost Crisis," a recent report from GOP Representative John Boehner's education subcommittee, fires the first salvo. The report itself is a joke—its "analysis," which relies heavily on quotes from newspaper editorials and quickie interviews with worried parents, wouldn't pass muster as an undergraduate paper. And while "wasteful costs" can certainly be found—some schools are turning themselves into "Jacuzzi U" in the arms race for top students—the report neglects to mention the real budget-breakers: Big Science, competitive salaries and computerized information systems.

The White House plans to pin the blame on universities for making higher education unaffordable to students from low- and middle-income families, as well as for allowing too many students to drop out. A new report from the College Board finds that public universities and community colleges raised tuition by 14 percent this year, the highest rate in three decades. Although these increases mainly compensate for declining government support, the GOP believes that bashing colleges for what Boehner assails as "hyperinflation" is a political winner.

The Bush Administration and its friends in Congress have one thing right: Higher education is in deep trouble. But their proposed remedy would make things much worse. The trickledown economic mess has obliged almost every state to cut back on support for public universities, but Republicans are telling these cash-starved institutions to hold the line on tuition or lose millions of dollars in federal grants and loans (in fact, legislation has just been introduced that would do that). Meanwhile, because of budget cutbacks, universities are reducing the number of courses, which makes it harder for students to take the classes required for graduation. It is in this context that Bush's Education Department wants to impose stringent national accreditation standards emphasizing graduation rates. Such a policy would create yet another hurdle for students from low-income families, who typically take longer to graduate, because they must juggle the demands of college with full-time jobs.

This attempt to pit hard-working parents against supposedly slothful academics exploits the honest concerns of working- and middle-class families about how they're going to pay for their children's college education. The cynicism behind these proposals is impressive, even by the standards of the current Administration. Although the nostrums are being urged in the name of institutional accountability—a "leave no child behind" act for higher education—by tightening the screws, Bush & Co. would almost certainly leave many more young people behind.

The demise of California's once-vaunted system of public higher education illustrates the extent of the problem and the shortcomings of the GOP's approach. When California's Master Plan for Higher Education was unveiled in 1960, it became the gold standard for expanding access to a college education. That plan promises every high school graduate in the state a good and affordable education. The top 12.5 percent are guaranteed a place in the University of California (UC) system—Berkeley, UCLA and the like—and the top third are assured a spot in one of the California State universities (CSU), like Sacramento State. All high school graduates can enter a community college, and if they make the grade, they're entitled to transfer to a UC or CSU school.

The Master Plan hasn't officially been repealed, but its guarantee of universal higher education is effectively dead. Freshman tuition at the University of California has been kept comparatively low ($5,437, as compared with $6,149 at the University of Virginia and nearly $8,000 at the University of Michigan), but that's quickly changing. With the state hemorrhaging money, public support for higher education has been trimmed; the state now contributes about 22 percent of the university's operating budget, down from 54 percent in 1960. The cost of attending UC rose a jaw-dropping 30 percent this year, an increase second in magnitude only to the University of Arizona. Budget cuts also forced the university to postpone opening a new campus designed to draw students from the Central Valley, one of the poorest and most underserved regions in the state.

The picture is even grimmer at the community colleges. As enrollment increases have outstripped funding, many campuses

David L. Kirp's dissection of American universities, Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education, *has just been published by Harvard University Press. He is a professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley.*

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have been forced to cut courses and put a cap on enrollment. To balance the books, community colleges raised their fees more than a third, from $11 to $18 a unit. That's only about $150 a term, but community-college students are especially sensitive to tuition hikes. The higher the cost, the less they're willing to risk a job now for uncertain future prospects. At a recent hearing in Sacramento, community-college officials estimated that enrollment was 90,000 below what they had been expecting.

The Master Plan's promise of mobility to community-college graduates—do well and you can transfer to a public university—has also fallen victim to the state's fiscal woes. In recent years the number of transfers has been steadily increasing, and to keep pace with demand, the state agreed to underwrite 4 percent annual growth for UC and CSU. This past summer, the legislature broke the agreement. The result is as dispiriting as it is predictable: The University of California has closed off enrollment for the winter semester, and 1,500 transfer applications from community-college graduates were returned unread. The CSU system, facing the same pressures, will turn away an estimated 20,000 students next spring. Come next fall, the situation will be even worse.

Public higher education is no longer an engine of opportunity. Quite the opposite—it generates inequality.

California's self-inflicted political wounds have made perfect fodder for the late-night TV talk-show hosts. But when it comes to higher education, California's dismal story typifies what's happening across the country. Nationwide, college enrollments are steadily growing. But because state support and tuition don't fully cover the cost of providing an education, each new student means more red ink for the university. That's why many universities are turning away eligible students or ratcheting up their admission standards. While costs keep going up for everything from buying new technology to patching aging campuses, the share of higher-education operating expenses paid for by state tax dollars has been cut by more than a quarter since 1980. Some states now contribute less than 15 percent to university operating costs, and tuition has shot up mainly to cover the shortfall. State budget cuts have also forced many campuses to shrink curriculums. This fall the University of Illinois system canceled about 1,000 classes when the state lopped nearly $200 million from the budget, Virginia Tech shut down an education major and the University of Colorado dropped some academic programs in business and journalism.

For the better part of a century, says Mark Yudof, president of the University of Texas System, state legislatures and public universities have had a compact: "In return for financial support from taxpayers, universities agreed to keep tuition low and provide access for students from a broad range of economic backgrounds, train graduate and professional students, promote arts and culture, help solve problems in the community, and perform groundbreaking research."

No longer—now it's the market, not the commonweal, that calls the shots. The value of a college education has skyrocketed. Today's male college graduates make $32,000 a year more than those with only a high school diploma, up from a $15,000 differential in 1975, after adjusting for inflation. This leaves public officials more inclined to perceive the BA not as a social investment but as a ticket to personal financial security. "Legislators and governors everywhere have become accustomed to letting higher education pay its own way," says Robert Zemsky, who runs the Learning Alliance for Higher Education at the University of Pennsylvania, "reminding those who balk at ever-higher tuition that, from the perspective of a return on investment, nothing beats a college education." Last spring Yudof confirmed the demise of the historic compact when he brokered a deal with Texas legislators; essentially, it blurs the line between public and private institutions by allowing each campus to determine its own tuition.

The market mindset also shapes how lawmakers are viewing financial aid—not as a response to students' need but as an investment in the state's productivity. Georgia's well-publicized "HOPE" scholarships paved the way, and now a dozen states award hundreds of millions a year in merit scholarships to keep top-ranked high school graduates from going out of state. Almost all that money goes to well-off students who would have attended college anyway, instead of to low-income students who otherwise can't afford a college education. Whether the policy yardstick is efficiency or equity, this is a misguided approach. David Breneman, an economist and dean of the University of Virginia's education school, says he "can't remember a time when the instincts of politicians have been so at odds with what most economists seem to think is sensible policy."

The biggest losers in this market-driven higher-education world are students from low-income families. That's no surprise, since equity has never been a concern of the market-minded. What's startling, though, is the magnitude of the impact of family income on educational opportunity.

At elite universities, a study by the Century Foundation finds, almost three-quarters of the students come from the top quartile of socioeconomic status; fewer than 10 percent come from the bottom half. Similarly gross disparities are also evident in less selective schools. Fewer than half of college-qualified high school graduates from families with incomes below $25,000 enroll in four-year colleges, a 2003 Congressional committee report concludes, and nearly a quarter of them never pursue any higher education. By contrast, five out of every six students whose families earn more than $75,000 enroll in a four-year institution, and just 4 percent never go beyond high school. Terry Hartle, senior vice president at the American Council on Education, neatly summed up the situation in a *Los Angeles Times* article: "Smart poor kids go to college at the same rate as stupid rich kids."

Low-income students are also much slower, and less likely, to graduate than their well-off peers. Forty-one percent of undergraduates whose family income is in the top quartile get degrees within five years, reports Frank Newman in his forthcoming book *The Future of Higher Education*, but only one-seventh as many from the bottom quartile—6.1 percent—graduate in the same time period. While federal scholarship and loan programs are intended to close this gap, convoluted eligibility rules discourage students from applying. And with a ceiling of $4,050 for Pell Grants, this aid doesn't begin to match the escalating cost of going to college. The latest College Board report concludes that finan-

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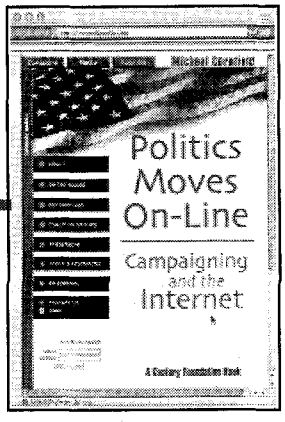

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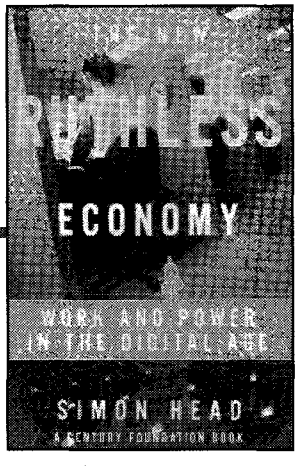

The New Ruthless Economy
Work and Power in the Digital Age

By Simon Head
A Century Foundation Report
published by Oxford University Press
Cloth, 240 pp., 0-19-516601-9, $28.00

In the great boom of the 1990s, top management's compensation soared, but the wages of most Americans barely grew at all. This wages stagnation has baffled experts, but in *The New Ruthless Economy*, Simon Head points to information technology as the prime cause of this growing wage disparity. Drawing upon ten years of research visiting work- places across America, ranging from medical offices to machine tool plants, Head offers dramatic insight into the negative impact of information technology on the quality of working life in the United States.

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cial aid hasn't kept pace with tuition increases.

In short, public higher education is no longer an engine of opportunity. Quite the opposite—it generates inequality. The upcoming review of the Higher Education Act provides an apt occasion for a national conversation on college affordability and access, but that's not what the GOP intends. In the mind of George Bush, the "bully pulpit" is a pulpit for bullying.

The outlines of a smarter and fairer federal policy are readily sketched. Government's first priority should be to put a thumb on the equity side of the scale in order to narrow the access gap. This doesn't have to cost billions of dollars. "It may be sufficient," argue economists David Ellwood and Thomas Kane, "simply to target [financial] aid more effectively."

Public universities can do their part by spending less on the status wars—the competition for recognition in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings that leads schools to woo applicants with resort-quality, multimillion-dollar recreation centers and residence halls. States can help by phasing out their expensive merit-based scholarships. The principle is simple: Families that can afford to pay for their children's education should foot the bill. But the spotlight must be on Washington. As David Breneman points out, "Only the federal government has the incentive and the resources to underwrite the access agenda."

Students from low-income families are reluctant to borrow money, because they're uncertain how they'll fare in college, and they're also most likely to drop out of school. That's why it makes sense to offer them scholarships rather than loans—a policy just adopted by the University of North Carolina—at least during the first two years of their college education. Once they make it past that hurdle, they can finance the rest of their schooling with loans, ideally keyed to likely future earnings. And simplifying the Kafkaesque eligibility rules for federal aid would help matters as well.

Good policy entails more than jiggling with scholarship and loan formulas. Schools like the University of Texas at El Paso and New York City's LaGuardia Community College have done remarkably well in recruiting and holding on to low-income students. These schools have adopted initiatives that monitor students' progress, helping them to select majors, catching them before they fail and giving them the mentoring they need. For his part, Thomas Kane has gone beyond analyzing the data to becoming directly involved in the lives of students. A few years back he launched College Opportunity and Career Help (COACH), a Boston-area program that gives low-income high school students the kind of counseling that well-to-do families take for granted. Cloning such initiatives would be a wise social investment. These programs cost money, though, and to pay for them Washington would have to roll back the GOP tax cuts.

"Part of the agenda behind this discussion of accountability," Representative Robert Andrews, a Democrat on John Boehner's education subcommittee, points out, "is to distract attention away from the fact that [the Bush Administration] can't afford significant increases in student aid because they've already given the money away in tax cuts." Such pseudo-populism is nothing new—it's the underpinning of compassionate conservatism—but the White House higher-education agenda goes beyond simple austerity. What's being pitched as a lecture delivered on behalf of overburdened parents to irresponsible university administrators—get your budgets under control, get your students out the door—is a contrivance for undermining the chances of poor students, and making things harder for the middle class as well. It's hard to imagine a higher-education policy less compassionate than that. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

this policy. The second edict was interpreted as an attack on Islam, and protests against it became the rallying point of Moroccan nationalism. The date of the second edict was May 16, a date commemorated by the Casablanca bombings on May 16, 2003. It seems unlikely that this is mere coincidence. The silence of our leaders and the US intelligence community on this subject suggests either ignorance or an unwillingness to admit the links between colonialism and jihadist terrorism. SPENCER SEGALLA

THE COMPASSION OF W

Silver Spring, Md.

■ George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" [Joe Conason, "Where's the Compassion?" Sept. 15] reminds me of Richard Nixon's "law and order," Herbert Hoover's "prosperity is just around the corner" and George H.W. Bush's "read my lips—no new taxes!" A revealing measure of the President's "compassion" is his record on tobacco. In February a twenty-eight-member advisory commission on smoking and health unanimously recommended a $2-a-pack boost in the federal cigarette tax, saying it would prevent 3 million premature deaths and help 5 million smokers quit within a year. No way, said the compassionate one, who has received large infusions of campaign money from tobacco interests.

The White House tried for years to eviscerate the global tobacco-control treaty adopted this year by the World Health Organization. It also sought to use anti-terrorism legislation to shield US tobacco companies from foreign lawsuits. This from the world's best-known exponent of compassion. MORT PAULSON

Santa Rosa, Calif.

■ Bush's "compassionate conservatism" is in keeping with his abuse of the English language. In the same vein, when his vaunted reason for a pre-emptive strike against Iraq turned out to be bushwah, he transformed his motivation into his deep desire to liberate Iraqis from their murderous leader. So, like the Americans in Vietnam who destroyed a village in order to save it, Bush unleashed his war machine to slaughter thousands. In Bush's lexicon this would be "compassionate carnage."

LIESELOTTE HOFMANN

Littleton, Colo.

■ Whenever I hear George W. Bush talk about bringing democracy to the long-suffering people of Iraq, I think back to his very undemocratic "election" in 2000. When he travels around Africa espousing the virtues of democracy, I feel the disconnect between those words and Karl Rove's attempts to gerrymander the 2004 Congressional elections in states like Colorado and Texas. And when I hear W talk about the need to topple regimes in Iran and Syria to bring democracy to the good folks in those places, I am reminded of the 200 million corporate dollars he will have to spend for his "re-election" on a media machine made GOP-friendly by Michael Powell and his FCC buddies.

As I contemplate this lunacy, I am left with the unsettling thought that George W. Bush is to democracy as Idi Amin is to vegetarianism.

DONALD R. KNIGHT

CORRECTION

■ In Jonathan Schell's October 27 "Letter From Ground Zero," Douglas Feith was not among the signers of the 1998 letter urging President Clinton to attack and overthrow Saddam Hussein.

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COMMENT

Camp Wellstone

Paul Wellstone won elections as a progressive by energizing and mobilizing a large base, staying close to community organizing efforts of all kinds and fearlessly pressing a bold agenda. His model of successful political action is one that can be applied by others, and that is what the Camp Wellstone training program—coming to a political battleground state near you—is all about. Camp Wellstone is a training program put on by Wellstone Action, the nonprofit, nonpartisan group set up by sons Mark and David to carry on the work of their parents. The program started because Mark and David believe that the best tribute possible to the life of Paul Wellstone is to have many thousands of others embrace his legacy of organizing, advocacy and winning elections.

Camp Wellstone is a fast-paced, two-and-a-half-day traveling crash course that blends the concepts of community organizing, large-scale grassroots campaigns and progressive leadership with intensive training in the nuts and bolts of effective political work. About 110 people go through Camp Wellstone at a time. People divide into three tracks that reflect the Wellstone model: working on electoral campaigns, organizing and activism, and being a candidate. Camp participants stay in their tracks for much of the weekend, coming together in several joint sessions so that the people interested in electoral campaigns, those interested in community organizing and those running for office can learn from one another.

A sampling of the sessions at Camp Wellstone include: building, growing and mobilizing a base; message development; field organizing the Wellstone way; the politics of conviction—how to lead as a candidate; understanding targeting; action planning. Camp attendees also practice applying the skills they learn with hands-on exercises like delivering a one-minute stump speech, making strategic decisions by developing a sample campaign budget and participating in a simulated press conference.

Each camp has some of the best national trainers in the field, along with experts drawn from the local area. There are always trainers present who were heavily involved in Paul Wellstone's successful Senate campaigns. The first camps have attracted a wide variety of participants. There are young people exploring a career in politics or community organizing. There are average citizens who have decided it's time to get more involved and want to know how to do that. There are seasoned activists exploring ways to be more effective advocates. And there are current and potential candidates, often running for local offices like school board, city council and state legislature.

Wellstone Action has put on five camps so far, with the plan to conduct another thirty (two to three a month) by the end of next year. The camps will be conducted mainly in battleground states like Florida, Missouri, Michigan and Pennsylvania, where this kind of organizing can ultimately have an impact on national politics. Wellstone Action will team up with like-minded organizations—like the Partnership for America's Families (www.americasfamilies.org), the Service Employees (SEIU), the Steelworkers, environmental organizations and peace and justice groups—to put on these camps. These organizations and others are sending their members for training and looking to hire graduates of the camps as organizers. By the end of 2004, close to 4,000 people will have attended a camp. But Wellstone Action will not stop at the end of 2004. Building the progressive infrastructure that Paul Wellstone cared about will take time, so the camp program will be a long-term endeavor. The goal ultimately is that hundreds of people will run for office and win, thousands will consider organizing as a career and progressive organizations will be dramatically strengthened by leaders with enhanced skills.

Paul Wellstone wrote in his book *The Conscience of a Liberal* about the critical ingredients for effective political activism: "good ideas and policy, so that your activism has direction; grassroots organizing, so that there is a constituency to fight for the change; *and* electoral politics, since it is one of the ways people feel most comfortable deciding about power in our country." Wellstone practiced what he preached and ended up making a difference in the lives of many by building progressive power. Above all, Paul Wellstone would want us to keep learning how to help make the progressive movement more capable, strategic and successful. That's what Camp Wellstone is all about.

JEFF BLODGETT

Jeff Blodgett, executive director of Wellstone Action, ran Paul Wellstone's 1990, 1996 and 2002 Senate campaigns. To learn more about Camp Wellstone and Wellstone Action, visit www.wellstone.org.

The 'Kennedy Factor'

Arnold Schwarzenegger has sold himself to his fans as a raging Republican Terminator. But his future will depend on the outcome of a battle for his soul between the Republican Party and the liberal Democratic Kennedy culture he shares by marriage. So far, the Republican allegiance is dominant. But the "Kennedy factor" could turn him into a Terminator with a stubborn liberal streak.

Why is Schwarzenegger a Republican anyway? He disagrees with mainstream Republicans on abortion rights, gay rights and the Clinton impeachment. He didn't go to the last Republican convention. He rightly suspects that the Bush White House was divided about his candidacy, with some favoring Condoleezza Rice as the successor to Gray Davis.

The answer is that Arnold emerged as an ambitious bodybuilder in a European social-democratic culture that he felt was too small for him. He broke away and immigrated to the America of Richard Nixon. The bodybuilder liked what he heard and began calling himself a Republican. It seemed simple, but then he met Maria Shriver, a liberal Democrat who was genetically unable to marry a real Republican.

That was two decades ago. Maria helped immerse Arnold in the worlds of the Special Olympics, early childhood education, women's rights and environmentalism. Arnold might be unable to acknowledge publicly that the Kennedys changed his outlook, but his actual sensibility was becoming more Democratic. The result was a political, and perhaps personal, schizophrenia, illustrated most clearly in Arnold's one political achievement before being elected governor: the after-school initiative he sponsored, and

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voters supported, in 2002. On the one hand, it was a much-needed half-billion-dollar program providing after-school activities for thousands of at-risk kids, especially from the inner city. But it was not exactly out of the Republican playbook. On the other hand, the measure stipulates that funding is triggered only when a budget surplus exists. So, because of Republican ideology, not a single child has benefited from Arnold's after-school program and, given the structural deficit in Sacramento, it will be years before any do.

Take another example. California environmentalists like myself fell off our chairs upon reading Arnold's official environmental platform: Preserving California's tough environmental laws, implementing the Sierra Nevada Accord, preventing offshore drilling and defending the state's mandate to address global warming by reducing emissions. It was a better platform than anything since Al Gore. Of course it was, because Robert Kennedy Jr., perhaps the country's best-known environmental lawyer, had a hand in writing it. Arnold visited Hyannis Port in July for ten days, where he engaged in several long conversations with Kennedy. He wanted to be the best environmental governor in history, Arnold said. Kennedy would not endorse him but encouraged Arnold to seek serious environmental advisers like Terry Tamminen, former director of the Santa Monica Baykeeper, a respected watchdog group. There were others involved too, like Arnold supporter Bonnie Reiss, a Hollywood-connected founder of an environmental mass communication group. Arnold won't be able to keep his environmental promises without firm state regulation of timber, oil, mining and other polluting industries, and major investments in restoration, none of which fit his GOP antiregulatory rhetoric.

It seems clear that while white male voters were overwhelmingly for Arnold, they were not enough for victory without the legitimizing power of Maria Shriver and her "Kennedy factor" among Democratic and independent voters. It is wishful Republican thinking that all those Democrats for Arnold were part of a permanent political realignment, when they were voting for a seemingly independent candidate blessed by the Kennedys against alternatives that suggested only the status quo. Shriver played an indispensable role when Arnold was staggered by attacks from the *Los Angeles Times* and feminist groups. The couple's connections throughout Hollywood, not exactly a fortress of the Republican right, also helped save Arnold's credibility.

The battle for Arnold's soul will not be over soon, especially in a state that is decidedly Democratic. Unlike New York, where Governor Pataki can discount liberals in hopes of an appointment from George W. Bush, Arnold is likely to be concerned about re-election and legacy. It is not likely that he will consistently disrespect his wife's heritage, and if he does, he could be sued by Robert Kennedy's organization, the Natural Resources Defense Council. The first test may be his environmental appointments. Countless other tests, like death-penalty absolutism, lie just ahead. In the longer run, Arnold may have to decide whether the two-party system, like the Europe he left behind, is too small for his dreams.

TOM HAYDEN

Tom Hayden has played an active role in politics and history for more than three decades. He served for eighteen years in the California Assembly and State Senate.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

How the Other Half Learns

PETER SCHRAG

NO EXCUSES: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning.
By Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom. Simon & Schuster. 334 pp. $26.

Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom have long been pillars of highbrow conservatism in America. Their massive, optimistic 1997 book, *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*, was an extended defense of laissez-faire progress in US race relations; an attack on liberals and civil rights activists who, in their view, vastly exaggerate the effects of the nation's residual racism; and a repudiation of affirmative action or, indeed, any other legal effort, other than laws against discrimination, to further racial equality.

In its philosophical posture, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* is obviously intended as an extension of the earlier book. But in broad respects, it's more a refutation than an extension. In their recognition of the continuing and widely documented differences in school achievement between African-American and Latino children, on the one hand, and white and Asian kids, on the other, the Thernstroms try to address an issue that has defied not only the kind of public policies and programs that they like to disparage but the evolutionary, untouched-by-human-hands progress that is at the core of their argument in the earlier book.

As their title implies, the Thernstroms—she's a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute; he's a historian at Harvard—believe the gap can be closed. They cite the achievement of one Los Angeles teacher and of a handful of schools—all charter schools, one in Newark, another in the Bronx, a third in Boston—that, in their telling, have produced remarkable results with low-income black and Latino students. What those schools have in common, they argue, is a determination to teach not only the academic skills that are the conventional measures of educational success but the cultural values—hard work, persistence, courtesy, appropriate dress, etc.—that middle-class whites tend to take for granted. Those "great schools alter the cultural patterns that inhibit academic accomplishment."

The Thernstroms recognize that these are special schools. The vast majority of public schools, they say, fail their disadvantaged students. But the essence of the disadvantage, they contend, has little to do with poverty or even economic class: The children of middle-class black professionals in affluent suburbs like Shaker Heights, Ohio, trail their white classmates by almost the same margins as black students trail whites nationally. The black-white gap in scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is actually larger among children of college graduates than it is in the population as a whole. The black-white gap for twelfth-grade children of high school dropouts is still three years. Nor, for similar reasons, they contend—challenging Jonathan Kozol's claims in his much-quoted book *Savage Inequalities*—does the gap have much to do with school funding, class size or such conventional criteria as credentials or advanced degrees as indicators of teacher quality. As they and many others point out, some of the nation's highest-spending schools and districts perform no better, and sometimes worse, than lower-spending districts.

The racial gap in achievement is the specter haunting American education. Closing it requires not just money but ingenuity.

The real problem, they suggest, lies in some combination of school inertia, failure

Peter Schrag's new book, Final Test: The Battle for Adequacy in America's Schools, *has just been published by the New Press.*

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to insist on high standards and the learning-resistant cultures, inherited from "a long history of racial oppression," that students come from. If this book had a mantra, it would be "culture matters."

As might be expected, the Thernstroms celebrate the high levels of effort and achievement that Asian parents expect from their children. By contrast, first- and second-generation Latino patterns often resemble those of immigrant Italians in the early years of the last century, who expected their children to go to work and sometimes reprimanded children who wanted to better their parents in education. The parallels include not merely the relative low achievement of first-generation children of parents, many of whom came from rural cultures, had little education and planned to go back to the old country—and often did—but also the ultimate success of the third and fourth generations.

Like many other conservatives, the Thernstroms dismiss concerns, like those of Harvard's Gary Orfield, about the re-segregation of schools in part because they dispute his numbers and in part because, as they correctly point out, given the nation's rapidly changing demographics and housing patterns, in most places there simply aren't enough whites around to integrate.

In any case, the Thernstroms really don't think integrated schools make that much difference in the achievement of black and Latino students. Nor, echoing conservative economists like Eric Hanushek of Stanford's Hoover Institution, do they believe that either money or smaller classes, the current popular favorites with teachers, parents and politicians, show benefits anywhere commensurate with their costs, both in dollars and in teacher quality. They argue, correctly for the most part, that California's across-the-board class-size-reduction program (to classes of no more than twenty) in grades K–3 has shown few demonstrable benefits. In some cases, because the program required thousands of additional teachers, it put kids, especially poor kids, into classes with instructors of marginal skills and experience, and sometimes with an endless string of substitutes.

What gets the Thernstroms into deep trouble is their notion that money makes no difference at all. They're right that unless it's properly spent, additional money may simply be wasted—and often is. New Jersey's lavishly funded urban districts, which spend as much, or more, per pupil as affluent suburban systems, have shown no distinctive improvement in student achievement. The same is true for the Washington, DC, schools, where even the Democratic mayor now agrees that vouchers ought to be tried.

But when they argue, correctly again, that schools serving minority students have to teach them not just math and reading (and, one hopes, history, science and civics as well) but need, in Huck Finn's words about Aunt Sally, "to adopt...and sivilize" them, and impart to them the cultural values and habits that will make them committed and effective academic competitors, they ask for something that the schools of the past were never judged by. In the first half of the last century, when, it seems, the Thernstroms believe schools were better, they could simply send their academic nonperformers into an economy with plenty of unskilled jobs.

Increased investment in education isn't enough, but to suggest that schools can improve without more money is absurd.

Which is to say that the Thernstroms want schools serving students, many of whom come from families headed by single mothers and/or homes where little or no English is spoken, to undertake two major tasks simultaneously, one cultural, one academic, for the same—and in many cases less—money and with fewer high-quality resources than suburban schools enrolling middle-class white kids. The fact that some schools can do it—often with self-selected students and parents and highly motivated teachers—doesn't mean they all can. Your local piano teacher probably couldn't write *Don Giovanni*, either.

Because *No Excuses* often seems more like a disjointed series of sections—on the successful schools, on the academic problems and achievements of various ethnic groups, on money, on the effects or non-effects of racial isolation, on the elusive question of teacher quality, on standards and accountability—the Thernstroms never confront their logical difficulties, and while they seem to have visited the handful of schools they cite as models, they seem only barely cognizant of the problems of other schools and children.

Similarly, the Thernstroms' tone of sweet reasonableness conceals their lack of nuance. It's true that one-size-fits-all class-size-reduction programs like the hastily conceived one in California (it was designed by then-Governor Pete Wilson to punish the teachers union) have had no appreciable impact. But in experiments like Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE)—where smaller classes are targeted to at-risk students, teachers are trained to take advantage of them and students get extra training before and after school, precisely the kind of things the Thernstroms admire in their charter schools—achievement is going up.

The Thernstroms reiterate familiar arguments, often true, about the ineffectiveness of many conventional teacher training and credentialing programs, and about the bureaucratic barriers to people who don't fit the conventional mold. But they don't provide even a clue about how to attract the hundreds of thousands of able, dedicated teachers—the "imaginative, ambitious, competitive innovators" they like so much—to the high-poverty schools that so desperately need them.

Nor do they understand that if the barriers are bureaucratic, they're often created in response to strong community and political pressure. Most places want safe teachers who don't mess too much with secular humanism, witch tales and evolution, or ask too many searching questions. And despite all the talk about high standards, most parents are confident their kids do fine and don't want them treated too harshly by demanding schoolmasters, preferring schools that retain traditional anti-intellectualism and regard jocks at least as highly as brains.

The policy solutions the authors still seem to love best are "choice" and vouchers, but other than declaring that they're a matter of "basic equity," giving low-income children some of the same options that the affluent already have, the Thernstroms don't grapple with any of the tougher fiscal, regulatory and political questions they entail. The academic race gap, as they say, is "the most important civil rights issue of our time," but it's inconceivable that it will be closed without the commitment—in teachers, facilities, materials, health, counseling and preschool programs—that this so-far-intractable challenge requires.

Ever since the early years of Ronald Reagan's presidency, conservatives have tried to persuade Americans that there is no major social problem that the schools can't fix. And maybe they can indeed do it—in part by broadening their mission to include the cultural agenda the Thernstroms focus on. But that, in effect, is to take on social tasks that in most other countries begin long before a child starts school and extend far beyond it. To suggest that schools don't need more resources for that is absurd. ■

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Starting Out in the '50s

DAN WAKEFIELD

FIRST LOVES: A Memoir. By Ted Solotaroff. Seven Stories. 298 pp. $24.95.

The best memoirs of recent years reveal "The Way We Live Now" as well as or better than most contemporary fiction. Through telling their personal stories, authors like Mary Karr (*The Liars' Club*) and Tobias Wolff (*In Pharaoh's Army*) conveyed a deep sense of the times they lived through, the problems and challenges of their situation, using the techniques of fiction—good dialogue, observation of details, dramatic descriptions of crucial scenes. The author's trials, failures and triumphs provide the plot.

Ted Solotaroff joined the ranks of such artful autobiographers with *Truth Comes in Blows*, a memoir of childhood and family that won an American PEN award in 1998. Now he has added another volume, *First Loves*, which picks up where the last one left off, with the author home from naval service in World War II and about to start college on the GI Bill.

First Loves takes place from 1948, when Solotaroff met his first wife, until the breakup of their marriage in 1962. The "loves" of the title refer not only to his courtship, marriage, fatherhood of two sons and eventual divorce but also the love of literature that became his lifework as a teacher, editor, literary journalist and critic. Through writing his intimate experience of each of these loves, Solotaroff conveys a great deal about both marriage and literature during that era.

When one of the partners of a broken marriage writes about it in a memoir, the results are likely to be embarrassing for all concerned—especially for the author giving his or her side of the story. Philip Roth pilloried his deceased first wife ("a hard-up loser") in his autobiography *The Facts*, and was in turn castigated by his second wife, Claire Bloom, in her memoir *Leaving a Doll's House*. With ironic justice, the two books are offered as a package purchase on Amazon: "Buy Together Today: $27.59." Read 'em and weep; each creates unintended sympathy for the mate who was poison-penned.

Solotaroff avoids this pitfall by portraying his thirteen-year first marriage with compassion for both the young wife and husband. The portrait is intimate but never demeaning, and the struggles of the couple reflect the marital issues of this transitional era before *The Joy of Sex*, when the challenges of two-career families were still uncommon. (Ted's wife, Lynn, won grants to study Russian and eventually became a translator and editor.)

Freud, he writes, "was so much in the air that you seemed to know about him just from breathing," and the marriage ended when both Ted and Lynn went into therapy to deal with their problems. Both their psychiatrists prescribed an extramarital affair "to make up for the experience we had deprived ourselves of by marrying so young. 'A little outside sex can go a long way toward satisfying your curiosity and scaling back your illusions,' was the way [Dr.] Wykstrom put it. [Dr.] McGregor thought that an office affair was one of the better ways to arrange such matters." After the divorce, Lynn had "a brief, disastrous affair with McGregor and for years contemplated suing him."

So much for Freudian marriage counseling.

At the University of Michigan, Ted wanted "to be a fiction writer, not a scholar," but his stories were rejected while his literary essays won prizes and scholarships, and a contest judge saw in his work "a critic in the making." But Ted was determined to pursue the fiction-writing dream, so instead of accepting a scholarship for graduate school at the University of Chicago, "I persuaded Lynn to go off to New York with me to lead a life that I already had diverse evidence I was not cut out for." Lynn waitressed and Ted did temp typing and waitered to support his fiction habit, while they lived in a classic bohemian pad: a sixth-floor-walkup cold-water flat on Macdougal Street.

Ted decided that "whatever the Village once stood for, it was now mainly a fashionable place to live, to shop, to date, to cruise, to booze. As the loft and studios were demolished and replaced by high-rise or midlevel apartment buildings, I

Dan Wakefield's memoir, New York in the Fifties, *is the basis of a documentary film of the same name.*

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sensed the ending that was taking place."

This was the early 1950s, when my friends and I were discovering the Village as the genuine place of freedom for writers, artists and all shapes and sizes of old-fashioned bohemians and newly styled Beatniks—both real and pretend. Ted dropped in "at the San Remo, where I was told the writers in the Village did come—those who weren't at the White Horse, on the other side of the Village."

I don't know how he missed Maxwell Bodenheim, the 1920s poet who still went from table to table at the Remo selling his poems for the price of a beer, or how he failed to run into new writers like William Gaddis. Nor does he explain what prevented him from going a mile or so west to the White Horse, where Michael Harrington held forth at his table in the back room (he wrote in his own memoir that he was there every night for ten years). On Sunday afternoons in the early '50s he could have found Norman Mailer, Vance Bourjaily, Calder Willingham and John Clellon Holmes at a table there (even Herman Wouk dropped by a few times). From 1955 onward at the Horse I met James Baldwin, back from Paris, Jack Kerouac, Seymour Krim, poet Ned O'Gorman, journalist Meg Greenfield, Nat Hentoff and just about every other writer who lived south of 14th Street.

This otherwise perceptive critic must have had blinders on during this time; he was disappointed that "the wild-looking guys I watched drinking at The Kettle were not painters but mostly neighborhood construction workers or movers." Had he walked a few blocks to the Cedar Bar, he could have encountered Pollock, de Kooning, Kline and every other painter who was making Abstract Expressionism the hot heart of the art world.

It wasn't a lack of painters and writers that persuaded Ted to give up his dream but a lack of confidence in his own writing: "There *was* an imposter in me, a false self that wished to stand above my groping existence and be admired for its artful cunning and grace. No wonder the rest of me had become so unsure, my writing feelings so dried up."

Back in "The Ivory Basement" of graduate school at the University of Chicago, Ted found "a mission" in his teaching at the university extension in blue-collar East Chicago. He also found a teacher who was instrumental in his development. Norman Maclean, author of *A River Runs Through It*, warned him, "If you don't start writing clearly I'm going to flunk you." It was "thanks to Maclean I had developed some of the directness and muscle of an interesting critic."

The aspiring writer was also enlightened by playing host to Bernard Malamud, whom he thought of as "one of the gods," but "seen up close, his modest mustache and careful mien made him seem more like a reliable pediatrician." When asked by a graduate student about the "Arthurian parallels" in his novel *The Natural*, Malamud smiled and said, "I threw in everything." Practical to the end, Malamud gave this final advice to Solotaroff: "You need a better car. This one isn't safe for someone with a wife and two children."

In 1957 Ted met fellow student Philip Roth, who confirmed his decision to give up fiction, describing one of his stories as "exhausted Hemingway stuff." Despite the harsh critique, Roth became a helpful friend, important to Ted's own development as a literary critic/journalist, alerting him that "Malamud had shuffled the deck, as Phil put it, of the Yiddish immigrant culture and laid out an entirely new hand." It was, he remembers, "a stirring time for me...there came the faint but unmistakable sound of a klezmer band that grew louder and more distinct as it continued to approach, so the advent of high-quality

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American Jewish fiction began to draw near and to get my mental fingers snapping, my mind singing along."

Ted sang the praises of Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* in *The Chicago Review*: "Throwing academic caution to the winds, I put Roth with Bellow and Malamud at the head of the line that was forming at the dawn of a new day in American fiction." His judgment was vindicated when Roth's stories won the National Book Award for 1960. Roth "appealed to the literary critic in me, who had grown weary of the buttoned-down writing that seemed to be the norm of our generation—the discreet stories of suburban or campus or corporate culture and its discontents, the odes to one's wife or lover's toothbrush."

Here it seems the critic who missed the painters and writers in the Village of the 1950s had his blinders on again, for in 1960 that kind of writing hardly seemed "the norm of our generation." By the time *Goodbye, Columbus* came out, we not only had the new voices that arose in works like Bellow's *Seize the Day* and Malamud's *The Assistant* but also Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Kerouac's *On the Road*, Ginsberg's "Howl," Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*, James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, Carson McCullers's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*—none of them very "buttoned down" or "discreet," while over in what had been the arid land of nonfiction, Gay Talese in *Esquire* and Seymour Krim in the *Village Voice* were tearing up the territory.

It was Roth, though, who struck the chord that animated Solotaroff's critical resources, not only through his fiction but also by suggesting his name to the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, who commissioned a 3,000-word piece on "The Jewish role in American writing today," published as "Rising to the Top." At first Roth himself was not pleased with the piece, but later wrote its author that "anyway, shy as I was some months back about being grouped in with a bunch of Jewish writers, I suddenly find myself willing to believe that this is something."

Not only was the advent of Jewish writers writing on Jewish themes a major breakthrough in American literature; Solotaroff's essay about it was a landmark critical announcement to the world. Like all the writing in the *TLS*, the piece was unsigned, but the word of its talented young author quickly spread, and opened the door to his career. Soon he was on his way to New York as editor of a collection by one of his heroes, Isaac Rosenfeld, and to meet Norman Podhoretz, the editor who "had turned *Commentary* sharply left, and made it an exciting, youthful magazine for the bright new decade that the candidacy of John F. Kennedy appeared to be auguring." Solotaroff left academia to become an editor at *Commentary*, later founded the *New American Review* and published books of critical essays (*The Red Hot Vacuum*, *A Few Good Voices in My Head*).

Although I take issue with his observations of "the scene" in the 1950s, especially as I knew it in the Village, I admired his personal account of growing up in that period. His coming of age as a writer, student, teacher, husband and father is told with sensitivity and skill. The young man arriving in New York on the brink of his career, "self-conscious about my baggy and too green suit and my too cropped haircut," might be the closing scene of a coming-of-age novel of the 1950s: "If I looked like a hick, I was a hick of parts who, as in some Frank Capra movie, was about to go up against the city slickers."

As in any good story, the young man in the too-baggy suit gets the job and begins a successful career in the work he loves. If the author had written it in the era he lived it, the odds are he'd have made it a novel. Today it's a memoir, and no less moving or artful for being true. ■

A Kiss in Java

PATRICK SMITH

INDONESIAN DESTINIES. By Theodore Friend. Belknap/Harvard. 628 pp. $35.
INDONESIA: Peoples and Histories. By Jean Gelman Taylor. Yale. 420 pp. $39.50.

In a broad square not far from the center of Jakarta, a large obelisk of concrete soars into the sky. But for the Javanese-style eaves at ground level, it looks not a little like our very own Washington Monument—and bears something of the same status. This is Indonesia's Monumen Nasional—"Monas" in the local parlance. Schoolchildren clamber up its steps, busloads of Japanese tourists disembark to take photographs and pay a small sum—accident insurance costs a little extra—to ride up its elevator (if it happens to be operating). Built by Sukarno, the nation's founding president, it is known among foreigners and locals of a certain cynicism as his last erection.

It is unfashionable to say so, but there is something powerfully evocative about this block of stone. The scale of it summons back a little of that larger-than-life quality Sukarno possessed in such abundance. It projects a kind of assertive oneness that suggests as clearly as anything you will find in Indonesia the vision of unity that obsessed the great "Bung," the brother of all Indonesians, during the frenetic years of his presidency, which came to a sudden end after a bloody, CIA-supported coup in 1965. Linger under the eaves at Monas and gaze out at the capital's incessant cacophony, and you feel enveloped by the mind of its maker.

Sukarno understood his moment well. How could he not, having given his life to the cause of independence from Dutch colonial rule since he was a Javanese villager in his 20s? The task before him was not merely holding in place the imagined community suddenly known as Indonesia: It was assembling and stitching together 17,506 islands to make a nation where there hadn't ever been one—across the separating seas and in the minds of people who had no notion of nationhood. It is hardly a wonder that he inscribed the importance of national oneness in Stalin-scale stone—stone planted in Java, from which oneness would perforce have to emanate, center to periphery.

It would be easy enough to look at Indonesia today and conclude that Bung K'arno was a complete failure. Aceh, the long-troubled province in northern Sumatra, is once again the scene of confrontation between government soldiers and separatists. Papua, the former Irian Jaya, could easily go the same route, as could any number of other provinces. Beyond this, Indonesia now seems beset with a small but radical and increasingly violent Islamist movement, which some suspect of ties to Al Qaeda and to two recent bombings of Western targets. Indonesia is nothing if not porous—and its population a potpourri of persuasions. But to attribute all this to Sukarno's shortcomings would be wrong—upside-down thinking. Better to read all the

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contending forces in Indonesia today as testimony to Sukarno's village-level understanding of the nation over which he presided: Yes, unity is the goal; no, it is not to be achieved easily, and not by obliterating difference in a nation that speaks more than 350 languages.

Sukarno gave Indonesians a sense of themselves they never had before. This was more than mere identity: The Bung showed people a way of standing in the world without, in the classic pose of Javanese humility, stooping awkwardly and cupping their hands over their groins. Indonesians remember this because pride—individual and national—is precisely what the Suharto dictatorship took away in the name of "developmentalism." Having started out as a nation with a grandiose vision of its place in the world, Indonesia under Suharto sank into a swamp of venality, protofascistic control and hypercorruption from which everyone, as an Indonesian friend once told me, emerged with mud between his toes. We soared like eagles at the beginning, a prominent Jakarta journalist once wrote, and then we scratched the earth like chickens.

These are the people both Theodore Friend and Jean Gelman Taylor are out to capture between hard covers. They both find a nation fraught with all the old problems—underdeveloped institutions, tensions between Jakarta and the provinces, the still-to-be-resolved question of what it means, precisely, to be Indonesian. But for a brief epilogue in Friend's book, they both end in the odd interregnum after the fall of Suharto in 1998 and before the arrival, two years ago, of Megawati Sukarnoputri, Sukarno's daughter, in the presidential palace. Both Friend and Taylor make much of history to explain the present—a laudable approach, though not without its pitfalls, and neither author altogether avoids a few of them. Not surprisingly, perhaps, both *Indonesian Destinies* and *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories* end on a note of uncertainty. "What makes a livable society?" asks Friend. And from Taylor: "Are there Asian values to be pitted against Western values, or are there universal human values?" Indonesia is like that: It will always leave you with as many questions as answers.

Theodore Friend, a historian and a former academic administrator, did a lot of legwork and a lot of study putting together *Indonesian Destinies*. This is a richly detailed history of modern, independent Indonesia—the first to appear since Suharto's dictatorship collapsed and all the old questions came rushing to the fore again. Sensitive to the defining nature of presidential reigns, Friend has divided his book into three: a section on Sukarno, one on Suharto and one on the succession that followed the latter's downfall. Not unlike a good Javanese centrist, Friend neglects the provinces. But there is much to admire in his account. He has a feel for the place, and there are passages in which the combined odors of rotting fruit, kerosene and open sewers—*eau de Jakarta*, let's call it—seem to come right off the page. He also gives the present all the historical echo one could expect. "Layers of cultural sedimentation," as he describes them, are fully explored. Indonesia, he writes at the outset, "must be understood from the inside out, not from the outside in."

Yet *Indonesian Destinies* is in many ways an odd beast. It is intended to be part history, part meditation and part memoir, and to the extent that these parts contend in the book, it is also part failure. Given that Friend is American, one supposes he sized up his potential audience and concluded, as all too many writers do these days, that his book had better have a personal element if it was going to find its way out of any bookshops. Friend's excursions into memoir don't work, and they mar his accomplishment. One does not want to finish a passage of historical or political analysis and then read about Friend's travel arrangements, bouts of dysentery, the ailments of his wife or—somewhat indiscreet, this—a passed-up chance with a wealthy Indonesian courtesan. Friend's description of a motorcycle ride with Benedict Anderson, the noted Indonesia expert and author of *Imagined Communities*, seems like an exercise in reflected glory.

More substantively, there is Friend's disappointing treatment of both Sukarno and Suharto. With the cold war behind us, Friend had an opportunity to begin revising our understanding of these men, but, along with the fetching courtesan, he has passed this up, too. Friend's thinking is too Western to do the job—and too much informed by cold war perspectives. So Sukarno remains the troublemaker and Suharto the provider of progress.

Sukarno had many faults. By his own admission he had no grasp of economics. Konfrontasi, his failed attempt in 1963 to oppose the incorporation of Britain's remaining colonies into what is now Malaysia, was an overweening error. "Go to hell with your foreign aid!"—Sukarno's recommendation to Washington in 1964, his "Year of Living Dangerously"—has already earned a place among the memorable suggestions of the era. But his mistrust of the West, while perfectly justified, was tactically overplayed.

Nevertheless, Sukarno is in desperate

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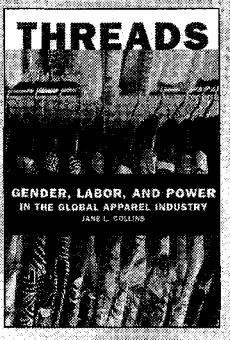

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need of a revisionist—a historian who, indeed, portrays his presidency from the inside out. His incessant emphasis on politics must be placed against the immense complexity of the forces he had to balance: the army, the Communist Party, a restless Islamic movement and yet more restless separatists. We will not understand his oversized vision unless we recognize the magnitude of the vacuum he was charged with filling—the extent to which he was called upon to make something out of nothing. As to his animosity toward the West, was he not right in warning against American "advisers" in Vietnam during the mid-1960s? In his "go to hell" speech, he termed America a nation that was once but was no longer "the center of an idea." One need not be anti-anything to recognize the prescience of the observation. Sukarno knew in his bones what many other national leaders never grasp: that in shaping a national ethos there is simply no substitute for listening to a society from the very bottom upward.

Friend comes up short on all this because he fails to appreciate the gifts of both identity and dignity Sukarno gave his nation and the extent to which he could never have hoped for more than a modest, messy kind of success. Sukarno was a dissipated romantic, Friend tells us, "aiming for the stars with a slingshot." Suharto, by contrast, gets pretty good press in *Indonesian Destinies*. "Suharto's success as president was not instant or without vulnerabilities," Friend notes as he takes up Sukarno's successor. Success? By what measure this? To be fair, Friend spends many pages detailing the malevolence of the worst of Southeast Asia's cold war dictators—corruption on a scale that debilitated the entire nation, the destruction of civil society and civil rights, the coerced forgetting of the slaughter that followed the 1965 coup, which put Suharto in power—in all, the evaporation of public space and public consciousness in favor of a corporatist ideology imposed across the board. But his presidency is nonetheless considered the lesser of two evils. We're even treated to an appreciation of Suharto's smile—"a measured, almost sweet acknowledgment of the beneficence of the gods." There are many Indonesians who would see it differently.

In effect, Friend buys into Suharto's depoliticization of Indonesia in the name of development—the cold war social contract through which populations across the entire region were forced to exchange democratic process for material progress. Friend is also too ready to explain such things as plain old corruption by way of history, tradition and culture—as when he considers Suharto's kleptomania. "In this," Friend writes, "Suharto as president would resemble the Javanese rulers of precolonial times." Maybe he did, but we can't accept custom as an explanation here without entering into an egregious kind of condescension. This is a very elementary mistake, and one is surprised Friend makes it. Culture and tradition are always useful to one's understanding of things. But they can never be applied as substitutes for political or personal motivation—not even when opportunists such as Suharto exploit them.

Theodore Friend reads Indonesia through the prism of cold war ideology, glossing over America's role in the massacres of 1965.

Friend's cold war perspective is most evident when he takes up the coup that toppled Sukarno and left more than a half-million Indonesians dead. We are still stuck with theories as to exactly what happened during the night of September 30, 1965, and who did what to whom and why. Friend lays out all the possibilities, but he then goes very soft on the degree to which Americans offered at least tacit approval to Sukarno's enemies. Washington's stance toward the loudmouthed, nonaligned Sukarno was, after all, something other than hands-off by 1965. The coup followed the CIA's expensive attempt to influence the presidential elections in 1955 and a reckless effort two years later to destabilize Sukarno by supporting provincial rebels. The fact is that funds and information from the US Embassy flowed to anti-Communists (and anti-Sukarnoists) shortly after the September 30 events—and as the mass-murdering was well under way. To defend the amounts of money and the number of names as "puny and post facto in the larger scheme of things," as Friend does, is sloppy logic—and finally inexcusable.

Jean Gelman Taylor has neither the space nor the inclination to enter into such topics at any length, for *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories* is both more and less ambitious. Taylor, a lecturer in history at the University of New South Wales, is far more detached than Friend—further from the ground. At the same time, she has staked out a lot of ground to cover and does so, by and large, creditably. Where Friend stays pretty close to the Javanese center throughout his book, Taylor's portrait of Indonesia takes in the whole, gigantic sprawl of it. She also starts at the beginning, with the earliest migrations southward from the Eurasian land mass. "This book is a social history more than a political one," Taylor writes as she sets out. "It narrates the journeys of peoples of the archipelago into today's republic." This is perfectly put. And it is as much as to acknowledge what is far more than a sociological thesis. At the core of Taylor's book is the argument that diverse, layered histories of numerous varieties have combined to make Indonesia what it should remain: an integrated (more or less) nation—the many that make the one.

Taylor's handling of history is very different from Friend's. They both see in modern Indonesia the outline of the old Majapahit empire, the courtly, cultured, Java-centric state that lasted until the fifteenth century. But for Friend (once again) this is deterministic, while for Taylor it is useful in understanding present-day patterns without somehow fixing them. To Friend, Suharto's reign was "the new Majapahit empire," while for Taylor, Sukarno and Suharto shared "Majapahit visions." The distinction is crucial: The one attempts to account for a political strategy and does not, while the other explains a historical consciousness and succeeds.

Taylor's supple way with history warrants one more example. Here she is writing about Aceh, the Islamic sultanate formed in the early sixteenth century (and now a province at war with Jakarta's army over both the place of Islamic law and the right of the Acehnese to their own natural resources):

> Through Islam, Aceh knitted itself into Indonesian histories of the western archipelago.... [But] Aceh was never a tax-paying vassal to Java's kings, for Majapahit's navies had not sailed so far north. The people and storytellers of Aceh did not look to Java for symbols, royal ancestors or models of court culture. Javanese never became the language of the palace or a symbol of high status.

And so on. One can admire this kind of historical writing for the care taken to explain the present without depriving its living, breathing inheritors of their agency and autonomy.

Like Friend, Taylor also recognizes that the enormity of the Indonesian story must somehow be told without depriving the reader of close-in perspectives. Friend, as noted, has his first-person encounters, which are too arbitrary most of the time to be especially rewarding. Taylor's approach is different—and imaginative.

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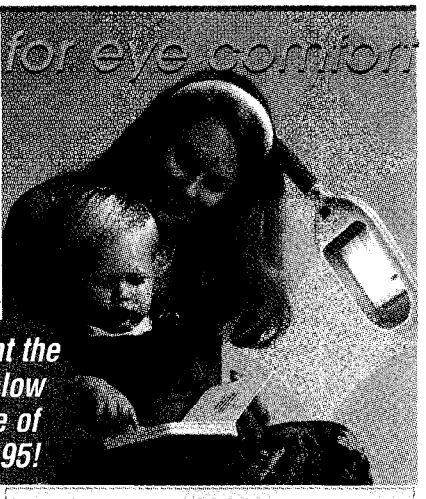

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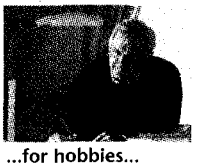
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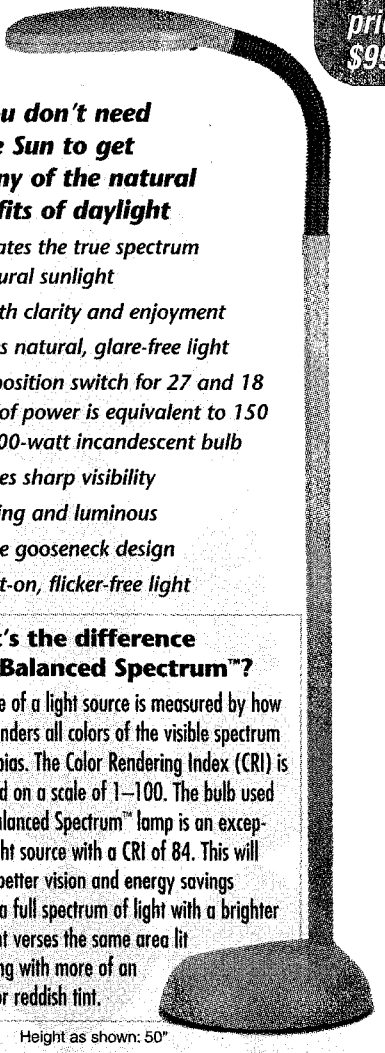
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Bigger isn't always better. We've looked at lots of lights, but this one offered the benefit of dual light levels of 27 and 18 watts of power. There are bigger, higher wattage lights, but that doesn't make them perfect for reading or close work. This lamp has a flexible gooseneck design for maximum efficiency, with an "Instant On" switch that is flicker-free. The high-tech electronics, user-friendly design, and bulb that lasts five times longer than an ordinary bulb make this product a must-have.

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She intersperses her text with almost a hundred "capsules"—boxes, as newspaper people would call them—on specific subjects. These range from rice to poetry to the evolving meaning of the word *merdeka*:

> *Merdeka*, a powerfully emotive word in modern Indonesian, means free, independent. Sukarno used it in the 1920s as a call to action to create the nation; his daughter, Megawati Sukarnoputri, used it in her 1999 presidential campaign to preserve the nation occupying the space of the old colonial state. In the early months of Indonesia's war for national independence, "merdeka" became a common greeting.

Some of Taylor's capsules go on for a page or more, and she offers them on a read-them-if-you-want-to basis. Among my favorites has to do with the meaning of a kiss in public. It is complex, depending upon the time and place: It means one thing in the context of a marriage ceremony, another when a pious Muslim extends his hand. Because of this latter meaning, Indonesians were shocked when Suharto's vice president, B.J. Habibie, kissed the grim dictator's hand on national television in early 1998. Suharto was already in disgrace and months away from his fall. To imply holiness in him was a horrific miscalculation for the man who would soon seek to succeed so unholy a creature.

Sometimes, it seems, a kiss is not just a kiss. But what Westerner or non-Indonesian would have understood this at the time? It is a perfect illustration of the way Taylor allows us to do something we too seldom do: to see by way of history—clearly and delicately—meanings as large as monuments right before our eyes. ■

FILMS

The Avengers

STUART KLAWANS

ELEPHANT • KILL BILL, VOLUME 1 • INTOLERABLE CRUELTY • IN THE CUT

Ghosts are notorious for getting stuck in time. Having lost track of the ongoing world, they will revisit certain hours as obsessively as they haunt a fatal spot. In Gus Van Sant's *Elephant*, the camera wanders like a ghost. It trails half a dozen teenagers through their Oregon high school, looping back repetitively to a few moments in their day—ordinary moments, you might think, which grow full and weighty only because they precede the kids' violent deaths.

Van Sant is not the first filmmaker to respond to the massacres at American high schools, in Colorado and elsewhere. He is the only one so far who has felt the need to linger over the texture of the kids' lives. Despite its power to devastate, his ghost story is full of vitality, precisely because normal time is coming to an end—but not yet, not until you've walked the halls with these young people and felt what they're about to give up.

Elias (Elias McConnell) spends his last hours doing what he loves: taking photographs, working in the school darkroom, chatting easily with everyone he meets. Michelle (Kristen Hicks) agonizes over the other girls' put-downs but finds refuge in the library, where she's welcomed as a volunteer. Carrie and Nathan (Carrie Finklea and Nathan Tyson), the high school's beautiful couple, get signed out early, having a serious affair to manage. John (John Robinson) just tries to make it through a day that's been messed up from the start by his dad (Timothy Bottoms), a middle-class drunk who needs John to take care of him. You meet other students, too, and a few adults—decent sorts, mostly—as the camera floats through the school, tracking now one character and now another. You also meet Alex and Eric (Alex Frost and Eric Deulen), the boys who stride across the lawn wearing camouflage fatigues and carrying heavy bags just as John walks through the door. "Get the fuck out of here and don't come back," Alex tells him—at which point, the movie itself goes back, returning to an earlier moment and another view of these events.

That scene in front of the school, with John going out and the killers coming in, becomes a chronological marker in the ghost-time of *Elephant*. You glimpse the scene twice more, from different characters' view-

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points, and each time feel a deeper, more horrific undertow pulling you from a spot you've now learned to identify.

The danger of this elegant construction—if I may speak here of mere artistic risks—is that Van Sant, through his cleverness, may overshadow his own characters. But in *Elephant*, Van Sant practices a sober brilliance: creating tracking shots that are as quiet as they are complex, elongating or compressing time by changing the images' speed, letting a mood coalesce from uninterrupted stretches of music (composed, for the most part, by Beethoven and sound designer Leslie Shatz). The direction, though hardly self-effacing, is subtle—all the more so, when you consider that Van Sant recruited a mostly nonprofessional cast for this film and had them create their own characters and scenes through improvisation.

The young performers all deserve to be called flabbergasting; but special mention must go to Alex Frost, the dark-haired, almond-eyed boy in the Triomphe T-shirt who took on the role of chief killer. Because Van Sant wisely refuses to explain the massacre, a special burden falls on Frost, who must be plausibly creepy for no plausible reason, disastrously odd yet nondescript. You see Alex memorizing grudges in the cafeteria, or bashing out *Für Elise* on an upright piano at home, and you understand he's both watchful and wounded. At that point, you still think you can grasp him. Then you listen to him coolly review the plan of attack for Eric—finishing with a sporty "Most importantly, have fun, man"—and you feel the bottom drop out of the world.

Maybe it's because of that loss of ground that *Elephant* so often directs its attention toward the sky. The students, when they're outside, sometimes pause in their tracks and gaze upward; and the camera, too, has a habit of studying the treetops and clouds. Is everybody looking to heaven for answers? Or are ghosts circling obsessively over the Oregon suburbs?

Happy Halloween.

By now, you will have heard several complaints against *Kill Bill, Volume 1*. It is drunk on bloodshed. It is infatuated with trash cinema and its own tricks of style. It is only the first half of the self-vaunting "4th Film by Quentin Tarantino" (which makes it, I suppose, a mere "1/8 of the Existing Canon of Quentin Tarantino"). True, true and true.

What you might not have heard is that *Kill Bill* boasts a breathtaking performance by Uma Thurman and a serious and coherent theme. For people with a principled aversion to violent cinemania, these fac-

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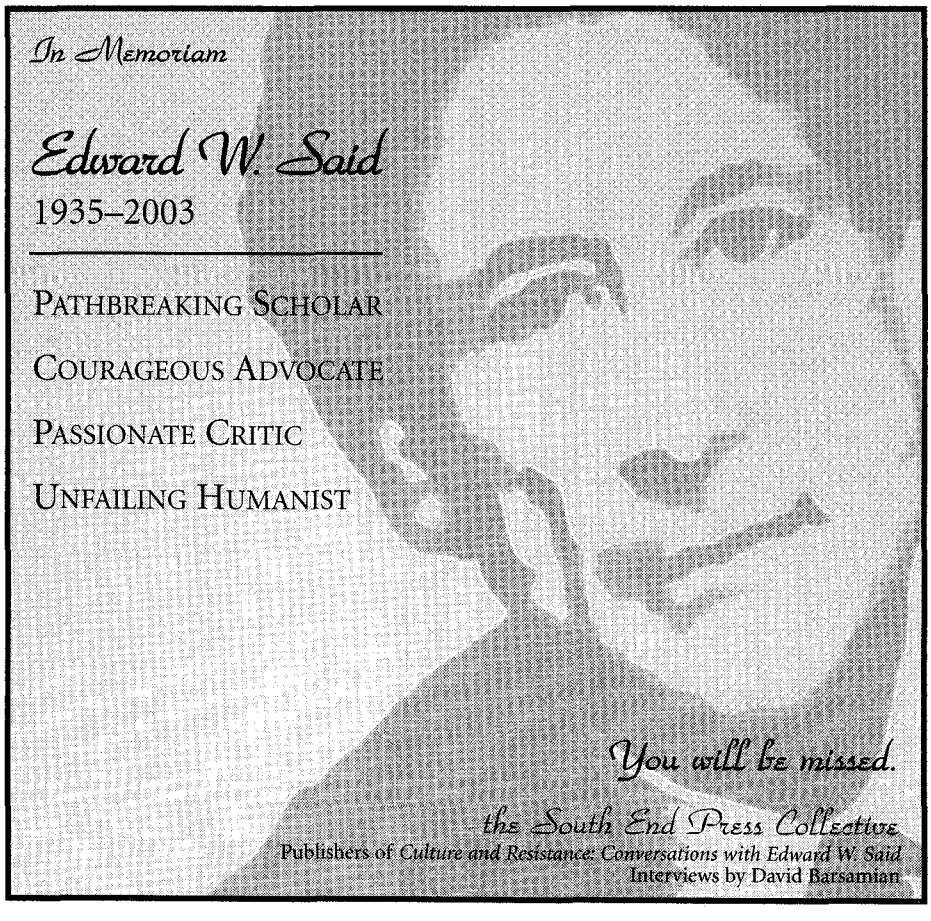

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tors will not be enough to justify ten bucks spent at the box office. For those moviegoers who don't object in advance to *Kill Bill*, the following might be worth considering:

Twice within the first segments of *Kill Bill*, a young girl witnesses the murder of her mother. Later, the movie's most grotesquely gory sequence climaxes not with another death (what would be the point, when there have been so many?) but with a spanking, as a young boy is released from the killings and told to go home to his mother. The character who is so devoted to maternal care—and who sins against her own devotion, almost as soon as the movie starts—is known as the Bride. She spends the movie exacting revenge for the many wrongs that were done to her, of which the most unforgivable seems to have been the killing of her unborn child.

Now, the mere presence of a theme doesn't legitimize a movie, any more than a pattern by itself justifies a painting. The same configuration can underlie a masterpiece and a connect-the-dots picture. The validity of the maternal theme in *Kill Bill*—the film's overlay of girls grieving for their mothers, of mothers trying and often failing to shield children—lies in Uma Thurman's performance as the Bride, particularly when she awakes in a hospital and realizes that she is no longer pregnant. The film, up to this point, has been jokey; the plot turn is lurid and improbable; and yet Thurman goes all out to play the moment as if it's real, while Tarantino nervily prolongs the scene to give the horror time to sink in. When an actress and her director have the will and ability to convert a genre premise into genuine emotion, their theme is no longer just something to distract a few critics. It's been earned.

I think a few award nominations ought to be earned, too, since Thurman is as astonishing in her playful moments as she is at this serious juncture. Look at her walk into a little restaurant in Osaka, pretending to be just an ingenuous American tourist; see her switch, almost without transition, to speaking with fierce, voice-trembling conviction, and in Japanese at that; then watch her deliver a deliberately bombastic, post-battle tirade, with neither more nor less straight a face than Daniel Day-Lewis put on in *Gangs of New York*. Thurman's range in *Kill Bill* is masterful. At various moments she seems to act from inside the character's guts, from behind the Bride's left shoulder (with a broad wink) and from the sweat-slick surface of the skin, and everything she does is right.

As for the rest of *Kill Bill, Volume 1*: I don't want to overvalue the pleasures of Tarantino's not-quite-alternative universe, where airline passengers are allowed to carry samurai swords and a Japanese girl group (The 5,6,7,8's) shrieks out a three-chord ditty titled "I Walk Like Jayne Mansfield." On the other hand, I won't deny having been entertained.

No further judgment will be coming from this column until *Volume 2* opens early next year. To quote the advice of the editor of *Film Comment*, with whom I happened to watch *Volume 1*: "It's half a movie. Write half a review."

It's always a bad sign when a movie credits more than two writers. *Intolerable Cruelty* lists five—and yet this modern-day facsimile of 1930s and '40s romantic comedies, particularly those that Stanley Cavell categorized as "comedies of remarriage," must have needed the whole authorial roster. The script packs in more dizzy cross-talk than any other three current Hollywood films, plus enough plot twists to fill a whole half-hour of *The Simpsons*.

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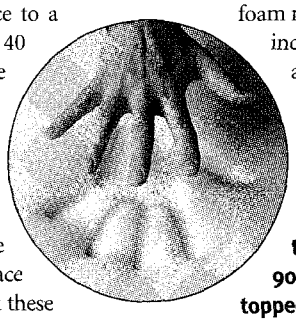

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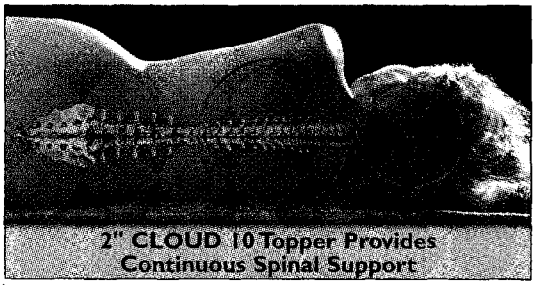

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If you think the preceding paragraph is no more than faint praise, then you need to see George Clooney as a heartless but toothy Los Angeles divorce lawyer, Catherine Zeta-Jones as the Woman in Red (his antagonist in courtroom and bedroom) and Billy Bob Thornton as a tall-hatted, chattily amorous Texas oilman—the latter being an amalgam, you might say, of John D. Hackensacker 3rd and the Wienie King from *The Palm Beach Story*. These characters inhabit a world where the terms "exposed," "penetrated" and "nail your ass" have legal rather than sexual meanings; where people lie automatically and really fast, agreements are put in writing for the sole purpose of being torn up and justice nevertheless gets done in the end, through nobody's fault.

Joel and Ethan Coen are the parties chiefly responsible for making this film work so well, after a clunky first reel. They're the ones who got such joyously highhanded performances from all the principals, starting with Clooney; and they're no doubt the ones who decided that the characters should all essentially be bodiless heads. These people do nothing but talk; and then, when desperation strikes, they fear they're suffocating.

Short Take: Because I have reviewed every feature film by Jane Campion, in tones that have ranged upward from respect to wild enthusiasm, I will record that she's got a new release, *In the Cut*, which she based on a thriller by Susanna Moore. Campion is entitled to a mistake. Let it go. ■

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POLICY

END THE DRUG WAR: See www.drugwarfacts.org, www.medicalmj.org, www.drugsense.org, www.csdp.org.

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PUZZLE NO. 2914

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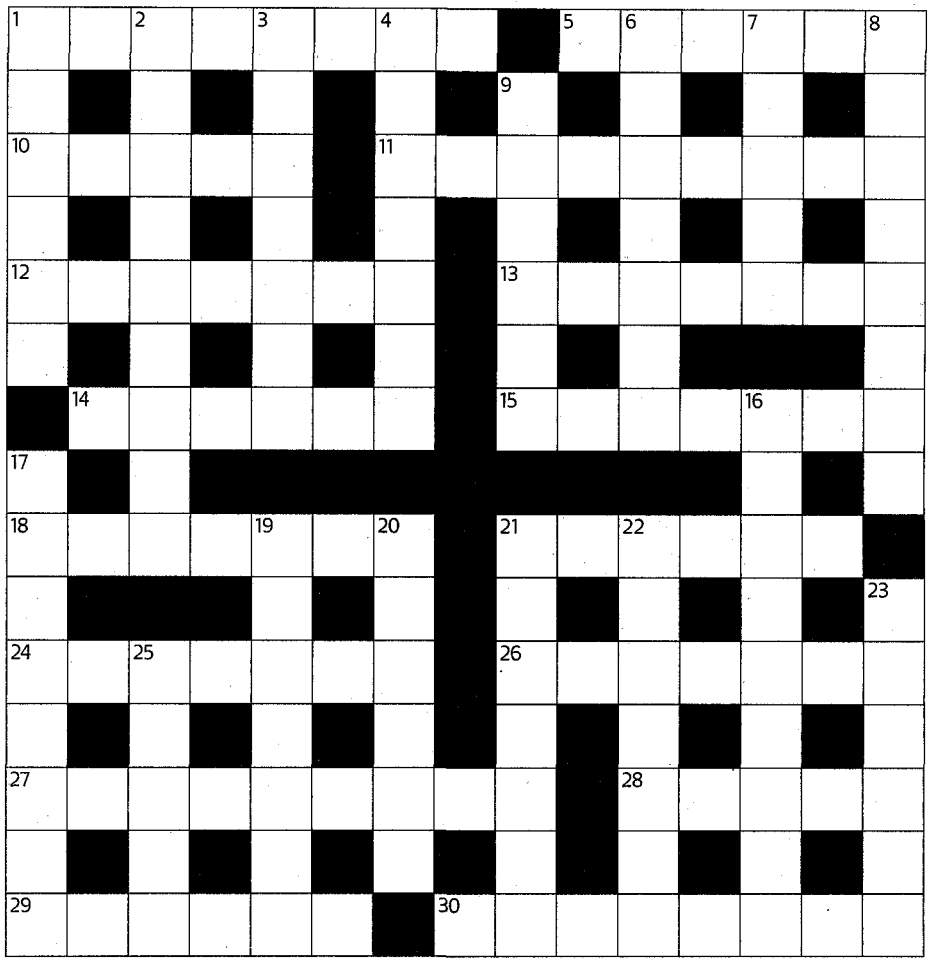

ACROSS

1 and **19** and **9** down Pack, for example, a movie about 9 down, giving his full name. (8,7,6)

5 A way to understand fully five of this was where thy father lies. (6)

10 Proving mine's different in the city. (5)

11 The so-called gangster blinks an eye, as one takes in others. (9)

12 The city we live in is just for play. (3,4)

13 A cockney's "edge of the tuft" is what we take flying. (7)

14 Act in part of what could make sense about the capital of Colorado. (6)

15 When I get placed in a sewer of sorts—at least with one who uses needles—you will see it's more unfashionable. (7)

18 You might not want to be taken as one, but the person you may be visiting takes years to make it. (7)

21 See 25 down

24 Does it tell how old the 1 across is, or does it just possibly contain something for the present? (7)

26 Halfway up on the keys, sounding something like the Mediterranean. (6,1)

27 Sort of pie in the middle, where you might get most shocked. (9)

28 A miss with nothing to catch someone with. (5)

29 With the least danger of a fast shuffle to include a couple of major points. (6)

30 Covers with a hard coating, though a short dash to the capital of Connecticut may bring on signs of age. (8)

DOWN

1 and **17** down Are they looking for something to see through, or just looking? (6-8)

2 There once was, so they often start. (It takes a mile of trouble to get stacks of it!) (9)

3 Irish lad made to go on about a shaky call for help. (7)

4 Sometimes follows "Look, ma!"—but that's what one may find Venus with. (2,5)

6 Worts to dig out, as a last resort. (2,5)

7 Oh, in a shake you should get to the city! (5)

8 If they rub you the wrong way, you have a complaint coming! (8)

9 See 1 across

16 Tabulations of thoughts that perfectionists make. (9)

17 See 1 down

19 See 1 across

20 If the majority does it to you, they probably want you to go into the office. (6)

21 The fly wasn't caught with such, proving an old poet can visit an important group of people. (4,3)

22 Kind of bumpy, being what even Homer might do with a headless rural sort. (7)

23 The way the mobile younger generation makes progress—or how they point to geezers! (6)

25 and **21** across Shortly Mr. Odets will meet Jack Ketch, making a real suspense story. (11)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2913

P	U	T	I	N	A	■	G	O	O	D	W	O	R	D
R	■	E	■	O	■	A	■	S	■	R	■	M	■	O
E	A	S	T	M	A	N	■	C	H	A	P	E	A	U
S	■	T	■	A	■	I	■	A	■	N	■	L	■	B
E	L	A	N	D	■	S	U	R	■	K	N	E	E	L
N	■	T	■	■	■	E	■	■	■	■	■	T	■	E
C	H	E	C	K	■	T	U	B	E	R	O	S	E	■
E	■	■	■	I	■	T	■	R	■	O	■	■	■	O
■	A	N	A	T	H	E	M	A	■	C	H	I	E	F
O	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	G	■	■	■	N	■	F
F	A	M	E	D	■	B	I	G	■	C	U	B	I	C
M	■	E	■	R	■	O	■	I	■	O	■	E	■	O
I	N	T	E	A	R	S	■	N	O	B	H	I	L	L
N	■	A	■	W	■	C	■	G	■	R	■	N	■	O
D	O	G	I	N	T	H	E	■	M	A	N	G	E	R

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